

THE WORLD'S ONLY SPACE-MOVIE MAGAZINE

SPACEMEN

JUNE

MARCH 1964

50¢ K

NO. 8

**OUT
OF THIS
WORLD**

*WITH BORIS
KARLOFF*

**THE
FAHRENHEIT
CHRONICLES**

BY RAY BRADBURY

SCIENCE FICTION'S HOTTEST AUTHOR

**20 MILLION
MILES TO EARTH**

THE OUTERSPACE MONSTER THAT DESTROYED CITIES



A fugitive from "THE OUTER LIMITS," ABC-TV's new science-fiction thriller.



SPACEMEN

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editor-in-orbit and
writer to the stars

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Science Fiction's Hottest Author.

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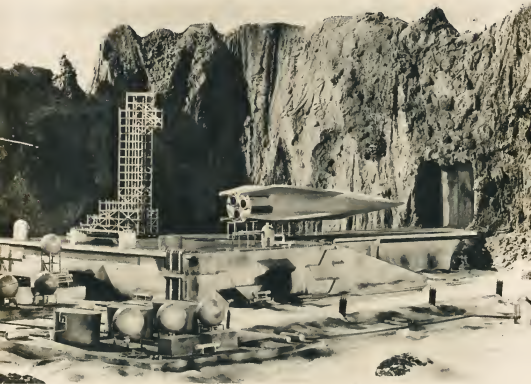
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Fritz Lang filmed it . . . 21st Century Science Thrills . . . !

SPACE SCREEN

rockets away for a spaceshipful of screen thrills inside outer space and in times to come!



THE TIME TRAVELERS become space travelers. This starship must speed the last of earth's 21st Century human beings out beyond Pluto, away from our Solar System altogether, if the men & women of the future are to escape the menace of the mutants. From the forthcoming AIP release (in color) in which Preston Foster stars and *SPACEMEN'S* editor makes a guest film appearance as Technician #3.

space-time spectacle

The time: the 21st Century.

The place: an Android Assembly factory, in caverns below the radioactive earth.

There is a hustle of feverish activity as the last few human beings in the world—after the nightmare horror of the First & Last Atom War—work to escape the ever-increasing menace of the incredibly ugly, super-strong mu-

tants. To assist with the immense manual labor needed to complete the hope of mankind—the Starship—scores of artificial human beings are being built.

The androids are made before your very eyes. In one fantastically realistic scene, a pseudo-man is constructed of many parts without the scene ever once shifting or being cut. You see an artificial arm taken from here, a synthetic leg from there, a torso stamped out of a machine; and the whole body put together on a table right in front of the camera. As (without interrupt-

ing the scene!) we move in for a close-up, the newly born creation opens its half-human eyes and rises from the table and walks away so that another android can be created in its place!

In one fast action scene, an android is being hacked to pieces in a sword fight. *Swish!* An arm is lopped off! *Thwack!* Its head flies! *Swoosh!* A spear penetrates its body, pinning it like a fly to a wall. Sharp blades continue to hack away at it till nothing is left but a bit of torso with an arm attached . . . and the arm continues



Even the spiders are caught up in a web of mystery in this Superman from Japan thriller called **THE MAN IN THE MOONLIGHT MASK**.

to write & fight!

This is the first screen appearance of **SPACEMEN** discovery David Hewitt, responsible for all revolutionary special effects featured in the film—which is called, incidentally, **THE TIME TRAVELERS**, and is in wide-screen & color. (Its title has been changed from its original **TIME TRAP**.) It stars Preston (DR. X) Foster together with John Hoyt, who had an important role in **WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE**; and, in a bit part as Technician #3, the editor of this magazine.

The scripter of **ANGRY RED PLANET & JOURNEY TO THE 7th PLANET**—Ib Melchior—has written & directed this one, which he calls his most spectacular.

moon-mars-stars

FIRST SETTLERS ON THE MOON has been announced for filming.

FIRST MEN "IN" THE MOON—inside it, that is!—the big Harryhausen special for 1964. Everybody

This Interplanetary Investigator from Mars' satellite Daimos operates his dangerous time-changing machine. Barry Morse in **Outer Limits** episode.



Gary Merrill (in another segment of **The Outer Limits**) adjusts the dials on the fantastic mind-switching device which transfers human brain-waves!





Strange doings on the weird lunar landscape in Germany's new spectacle, *Sonny's Flight to the Moon*.



Four fantastic scenes of Cosmonauts, a pterodactyl-like winged monster of another world, a robot that out-robbers Robby, and a weird extra-terrestrial carving... all part of the interplanetary thrills to be seen in **THE PLANET OF STORMS!**



is looking forward to his topping his animated skeletons of **JASON & THE ARGONAUTS** and **THE 7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD** with something top-notch in the way of Selenites (the Moon inhabitants as envisioned by the lively imagination of the late HG Wells). Incidentally, Harryhausen denies the rumor that his next film will be a sequel called **JASON & THE ASTRONAUTS**.

Geo. Pal, in the fantabulous new **Dimension 150**, plans a space-tacular that will reach out to the stars.

Meanwhile, back on Mars—another Melchior interplanetary idea, **ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS**, has gained momentum and should be in the editing stage by the time this reaches print.

And, of course, Ray Bradbury continues to give tender loving care to the creation of his master script for **THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES**, in which it is expected Gregory Peck will eventually arrive on the Red Planet for amazing experiences on the an-

cient world which revolves 4th from the sun...

the 25th century

THE MAN OF THE FIRST CENTURY transports us to the year 2447—but without Buck Rogers. The story begins in 1962 when a man who works at a space base accidentally sets off the controls inside a rocket on the launching pad. The rocket takes off—with him inside it, for a long journey into outer space.

He lands on the planet Blue Star and meets an inhabitant called Adam. Adam returns to Earth with the unwitting astronaut, to discover that by some mystery of space & time about 500 years have passed.

The spaceman & his Blue Starbuddy find themselves in a highly advanced technological world. The spaceman (Joseph) tries to adjust to this futuristic situation, and succeeds in gain-

ing the confidence of the 25th century scientists, to whom he reveals a number of incredible discoveries which he is able to make with the Blue Star inhabitant's help.

After a variety of experiences in 2447 A.D., Joseph comes to long for the life he left behind, and eventually the advanced science of the future world makes it possible for him to return to his own time.

Apparently Adam of Blue Star remains in the world of tomorrow, where his advice to the future man is not to become slaves of over-mechanization. A visually exciting picture.

Other space-time films recently completed include **JOURNEY TO THE STARS** (80 minute color documentary), **MOONSTRUCK** (novelty cartoon short), **THE RUNWAY** (French time travel tale), **MASTERS OF VENUS** (6 episode 128 minute British television series put together as a feature film), the Soviet **PLANET OF STORMS** and the Czech space spectacle, **IKARIA XB 1**.



FRUSTRATING

"Time for Space" was a good feature (in #6), especially when I heard about Karloff's Out of This World series. Gorath looks like an overgrown walrus with ill-up eyes but I'm looking forward to seeing it anyhow.

Buck Rogers was a character I never did like but being interested in posters from old movies I found the one on p. 18 quite good.

"Donovan's Brain"—excellent, superb, lovely (?). I surely want to see more foreign magazine covers like the one on p. 28.

My dad saw TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL and he that McAllan really deserved the honor of Specman of Distinction.

WDW!! (METRODOLIS) Because that is the only word I can use to describe it. I want to get my hands on that Metropolis Magazine if I can. (You end a Metropolisful of other re-releases are all raring to own a copy—but so far only one copy is known to have survived the British blitzings of World War 2.)

Regarding "The Monster Maker"—I think Ray Bradbury should have used his real name.

The review on FLYING OISC MAN FROM MARS was xint, with a few exceptions. I sure wish they would have used a little make-up on Mota when they made the pic.

I have #1 of FAMOUS MONSTERS for sale & if anyone wants it, it goes to the highest bidder.

DAN GERANLEAU
POBox 424
ISSAQUAH

Now you know why we titled this letter "Frustrating"—reader Geranleau offers one of the greatest goodies a filmmonster fan could hope to own . . . and then forgets to complete his address! Frankly, no one around here ever heard of Issaquah—for all we know it could be on Pluto! But if YOU want FM #1 badly enuf, no doubt you'll somehow track down the missing State.

SENSA WUNDA

Bringing back the sense of wonder that so many so-called Sci-Fi movies lack was WAR OF THE SATELLITES, which I caught on the TV set, a surprisingly interesting & fast-paced, awe-inspiring movie from Allied Artists. Altho it slipped up in a few places, it was a refreshing study in science fiction.

On the other hand, the recent DAY MARS INVADERS EARTH started out good with a little satellite model exploding on what obviously was a miniature set, but wound up being a confused, horribly dull bunch of nonsense so illogical & slow-paced one became bored.

Would it be possible to do articles on such things as HG Wells' movies, Jules Verne's movies, different spaceship designs, different film spacesuits, movies with World Camellia, Catastrophe or End of the World themes, and different filmic depictions of otherworldly terrains? (Don't see why not.)

Now comes a long part. I have a list. Certainly you will recognize that some of these movies were terrible, abominable & otherwise tripe. The thing about this list is not the quality but the quantity. By that I mean that the coverage you have afforded these is nil. From some of these shows you have produced 1 or 2 fotos but nothing really spectacular. NIGHT OF THE BLOOD-BEAST, DEATH COMES FROM SPACE, IT-THE TERRORER FROM BEYOND SPACE, THE GIANT CLAW, NOT OF THIS EARTH, ENEMY FROM SPACE, THE CREEPING UNKNOWN, 4-SIDED TRIANGLE, THE TOWNY, FIEND WITHOUT A FACE, THE ATOMIC SUBMARINE, THE CRAWLING EYE, REPTILICUS, THE GAMMA PEOPLE, DELUGE, VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, MASTER OF THE WORLD, THE BRAIN FROM PLANET ARDUS, GOG, SPACE CHILDREN, THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES, RDDAN, FORBIDDEN PLANET, ROBOT MONSTER, TARGET-EARTH, THE PHANTOM EMPIRE,

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Frank Gibbs who was robbed and murdered by a slot machine. A crummy Santa Claus in a rented suit finds that his bag of gifts is inextricable. The clever thief who dreamed up the Rip Van Winkle Caper finds gold doesn't matter in A.D. 2062.

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ALITA, FLIGHT TO MARS, ATTACK OF THE 50' WOMAN, WAR OF THE SATELLITES, THE AMAZING TRANSPARENT MAN, BEYOND THE TIME BARRIER, THE BRAIN EATERS, MISSILE TO THE MOON, CATAclysm, SPACEWAYS, DREAM OF THE STARS, THE MAN FROM PLANET X, VISIT TO A SMALL PLANET, FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, PROJECT M-7, PROJECT MOONBASE, TV's TOM CORBETT and ROCKY JONES, MAGNETIC MONSTER, HIGH TREASON, FP1 DOES NOT REPLY and TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL. (Ray, we will give you complete coverage on all of these pictures in our next issue. At least 6 stills apiece. The price of the issue will be \$5 and you will be the only one who buys it; but that's alright—anything for a reader. Seriously, the future is long and in the fullness of time you will surely find fuller coverage in our pages on a number of the films you named.)

How do you like my letterhead? Perhaps you reGOGnize some of the shows? There's the Manta Ray and an underwater quonset hut from UNDERWATER CITY, the WAR OF THE WORLDS flying saucer masterpiece (one of the most imaginative flying saucer ever made), THE CONQUEST OF SPACE space-suit, the Metaluna saucer, the VAMPIRE BAT, the DESTINATION MOON rocket, ROCKET-SHIP X-M and the diving suit from 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, plus a few assorted fiends & "its" from my gory imagination.

I enjoy immensely both of your fine imagi-movie magazines, SPACEMEN & FAMOUS MONSTERS, and hope they continue from now till eternity. They are both growing up immensely, presenting formal & mature attitudes towards imagi-movies as art, rating & exposing all monster frauds when they appear. I appreciate your pictures as they are sharp & clear. Nothing but praises. Thanks from the bottom of my monster & science fiction lovin' heart for 2 jobs well done.

RAYMOND H. ALLARD
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

FROM BEAST TO WORST

SPACEMEN is the worst of your publications. (It must be true! It's *about* the only one someone hasn't tried to imitate!) Of course you did have 2 truly great issues—#4 & 6. Wonderful information on FLASH GORDON and other superior science fiction pictures in #4; #6 featured some very good articles like the Curt Siodmak story, altho I don't think this belonged in SM as many of his works were horror & monster screenplays. METROPOLIS was one of the best articles that I have printed in any of your 3 magazines that I have seen.

The type of science fiction that I am interested most in is the future. Thus I will continue to buy SM to see information on greats like METROPOLIS, TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL and 1984.

DAVID SZUREK
DETROIT, MICH.

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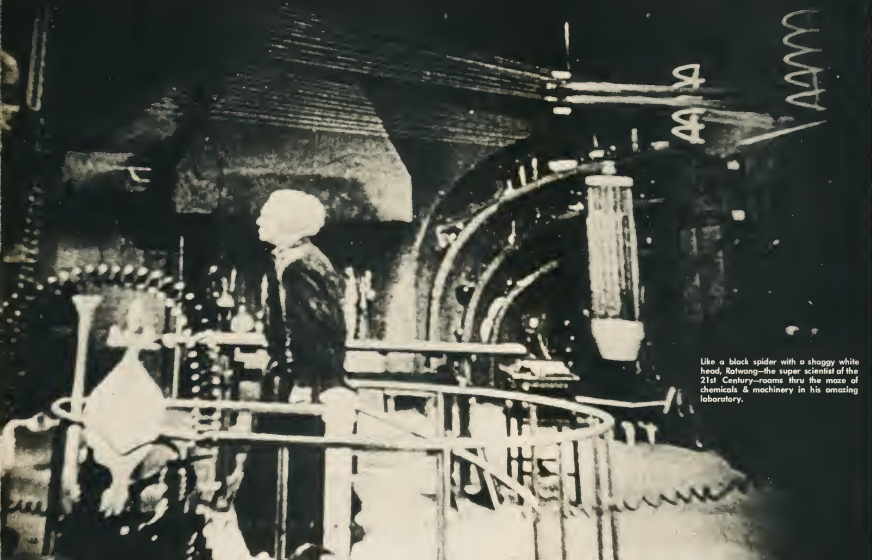


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METROPOLIS

Part 3 of the Filmbook Presentation
of the Sensation of the Imagi-Nation,
the Greatest Scientifantasy Film Ever
Made--Fritz Lang's Masterpiece of the
21st Century! By Forrest J Ackerman



Like a black spider with a shaggy white head, Rathwang—the super scientist of the 21st Century—rooms thru the maze of chemicals & machinery in his amazing laboratory.

What Has Gone Before:

We began with an 8 page installment, replete with 12 fotos.

Last issue, we expanded to 10 pages, with 13 accompanying pictures.

The picture opens in the Pleasure Gardens of Eric Masterman (Gustav Froelich, known in the German version as *Freder Fredersen*). He is the son of the Master of Metropolis, the supercity of 100 years hence. Young Eric, clad in the "balloon pants" typical of the early work of the late artist Paul, is amorously chasing about a bizarrely-clad group of beautiful female aristocrats.

Maria (16-year-old heroine Brigitte Helm) is the daughter of one of the subterranean workers who slave to keep the surface city operating. She enters the Gardens. With her is a group of workers' children. On an annual holiday, she is showing the underprivileged boys & girls how their "brothers" live.

Eric is instantly attracted by Maria. For the first time in his wastrel life he becomes aware of the workers who have supported him in such idle luxury. He descends to the level of the Machines to observe their plight.

Work-shifts in Metropolis are of 10 hours duration and utterly drain the men, who march leadenly like robots to the descending elevators at the end of their period. Eric is dwarfed by the mammoth machines which are providing power to this city of (van Vogt's estimate) 30 million people. Eric watches awestruck at the continuous operation of the mighty mechanical monsters. The men operating them are mere automatons as they toil to meet the machines' requirements. One weary worker, unable to find his job further, collapses in horror as he sees a pressure indicator climb inexorably to the Danger mark.

Suddenly the gigantic machine explodes!

Steam spurts from its seams . . . the very floors quiver & shake on their foundations . . . corpses fly helicopter thru the air.

Witnessing this disaster, Eric is dazed. Before his shocked eyes the smouldering machine seems to take on the form of a monster-god with gaping jaws. Moloch! In his momentarily deranged brain he imagines he sees slaves being goaded up long flights of stairs and into the fiery maw of the devouring machine-demon.



ROTWANG'S



The workers, their spirits long dalled by subservience, are unaroused by this catastrophe. Methodically the dead & maimed are removed, repairs to the Machine commenced, new drones take the place of the missing.

Eric rushes in alarm to his father.

High in his eagle's aerie, the pinnacle citadel of the soaring complex of cloudscrapers, John Masterman (Alfred Abel) directs the destiny of the incredible architectural wonderland of towering structures & aerial freeways that is Metropolis. Not for a millisecond does the welfare of the poor concern his busy brain; nowhere in his nervous system is a spark of pity to be found for the downtrodden drones who make his luxury & power possible.

Eric babbles forth to his father of the tragedy he has just seen. But Masterman is indifferent to the sufferings of the subterraneans. He is merely annoyed that his son should have witnessed this incident and been so affected by it.

Eric is appalled at his father's callousness to human suffering.

Determined to help right the wrongs of his father, Eric again descends to the level of the Machines. There, in steam-murky atmosphere, he singles out a worker who is feverishly attempting to meet the demands of a strange man-tall clock-like mechanism. The overstrained worker collapses in Eric's arms and Eric replaces him. Unused to such exertion, it is not long before his muscles are crying aloud in agony.

For some time John Masterman's spies have been bringing him mysterious scraps of paper, seeming to show some catacombs below the city. These sheets have been found on the bodies of dead workers, killed in accidents, or when inadvertently dropped. Puzzled by them, Masterman visits Rotwang, the mastermind of Metropolis, to seek an explanation.

Now go on with the story of the film...

REMARKABLE ROBOTRIX!

**in the realm
of rotwang**



The white-haired, wild-haired scientist is poring over work on his huge cluttered desk, which is illuminated by an unusual spiraling phosphorescent tube, when John Masterman arrives.

The inventor is excited. "At last my work is ready!" he exclaims. "I have created a machine in the image of man!" Actually, it is woman that he has created the machine in the image of, and one special woman: Hel Masterman, the deceased wife of the ruler of Metropolis. (But this is something that is never brought out in any of the 3 versions of the film I have seen, it just happens to be some information I picked up somewhere along the way.) "Now," points out Rotwang, "we have no use for living workers."



"Worth the loss of a hand"

Rotwang bids Masterman to follow him and they climb to his lofty laboratory with the fabulous array of chemical & electrical equipment described last issue in the words of Rudolf Keln-Rogge himself, the man who played Rotwang.

The black-robed scientist slithers across the room, thru a maze of equipment to a huge vertically mounted glass tube. Dramatically he pulls aside a curtain and—

Io! the lovely robotrix!

For the first time we see . . . Parody. This is her name in the book—sometimes she is also called Futura. But in the film she is nameless, simply a beautiful bronze enigma or siren in steel; a metallic Mona Lisa; an uncrucel Iron Maiden! If the God of the Universe had originally modeled his Adam from metal instead of clay, his Eve must surely have been this robotrix. My name for her is Ultima, and

if anyone in this world can tell me who in this world originally designed her, and if that individual is still (prayerfully!) alive, and where he or she may be contacted, I will be eternally grateful—even longer!

In the film, Ultima the robotrix is seated on a heavy squat metallic chair, backgrounded by a great 5-pointed star—the Seal of Solomon. "Arise!" Rotwang commands his crowning creation and—slowly, ever so slowly, an inch at a time—the burnished being obeys. Each gleaming plate at thigh, knee, shoulder, elbow, wrist, glides smoothly with oiled, liquid power, over its mate. It is greased, fluid motion with the look of enormous power, in a polished chrome-jewel setting! In the few seconds required for the glistening steel-girl to stand, who could miss one tiny, protracted movement in the increasing tide of suspense!

There is a raised ramp extending forward from the chair to the inventor and Masterman. Ultima glides upon it with dreamlike grace.

Masterman is literally dumb—with wonder. His eyes reflect disbelief.

The female automaton stops before

the pair, offers one polished steel hand to the paralyzed Masterman. The shock of near contact with the alien creation breaks Masterman out of his spell. He recalls.

Rotwang is beside himself with triumph. Wildly he thrusts his black patent leather-covered glove into the air between them. "Isn't it worth the loss of a hand to have created *this*?" he exults. (In the book he lost it by the fatal mistake of mixing Astro-oil with quicksilver—and it cost him his entire arm.)

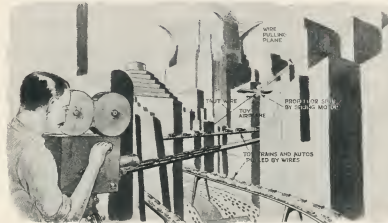
Rotwang continues: "Give me another 24 hours and I'll bring you a machine no one can tell from a human."

mysterious notes

Averting his eyes from the robot, Masterman says to Rotwang: "As always, when my experts fail I come to you for advice. For months we have been finding plans in the workers' clothing—what do they mean?"

The answer, which Rotwang reveals

"METROPOLIS" - A MOVIE BASED ON SCIENCE



The miniature set which was used in the filming of this remarkable motion picture. The trains and automobiles were pulled along the bridges by means of wires. The airplanes were suspended by a wire which was pulled by an operator outside of the set. At times full size lower section were used. The image of the upper stories being reflected in a mirror to blend with them.

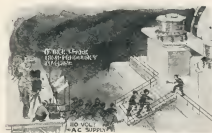


In "Metropolis," the city of the future, the lower classes are enslaved by the scientific and mechanical genius of the ruling group. Above is one of the laboratories in the "upper city." By tinkering a electric discovery the ruler of the city was able to enslave a machine with human life and intelligence. This philosophy is reminiscent of our own "scientistism" studies, which you all know.



In the photo above, the ruler's scientist is transferring the vital spark from a girl of the lower city into the fantastic machine, which he uses to spread disorder and destruction among the slaves. The set used in this production was remarkable for their ingenuity and imagination and the photography is unique.

—Photos courtesy Paramount Pictures.



The effect of sparks jumping about the machines was produced by placing a small high frequency apparatus near the camera as shown above. In the finished picture the sparks seemed to jump from the two huge coils placed on either side of the mechanism.



The spectacular scene in the scientist's laboratory. A weird effect was obtained by forcing compressed air through a closed tube containing a liquid and illuminated by a lamp placed at the bottom. Center photo shows one of the huge paper maché machines in the "power plant."



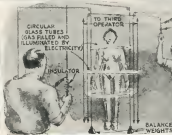
Of course the city of the future would have all the conveniences of which we dream today. The recently patented television apparatus, is in common use. By using it, those who converse may also at the same time see the other party.



The illustrations shown on this page are taken from the film "Metropolis" sponsored by UFA in Germany. The photography is now exhibiting the American public.



A sectional view of "Metropolis," the city of the future. Below may be seen colossal women pumping big human life but no soul.



Below: The workmen's underground city. Note the shadowed effect.



Right: Destruction of "Workmen's City." A small set was used and water, forced through pipes, was directed through the sides of the buildings and down from above. Pipes placed at street level ejected water in a geyser-like effect.



The concentric rings of light which played about the machine were hand operated.



The destruction of the "Workmen's City" at the base of the film. While the apparatus produced by the constructed scene of the small children. In the center may be seen the instrument used which was used to pump them. Full size set used here.



Behind the scene—Eric at the Clock Machine. (Karl Freund on camera.)

"Today I will tell the story of the Tower of Babel"





THE TOWER OF BABEL

to Masterman in the catacombs beneath Metropolis, must wait. The scene switches to the steaming Machine room, far underground. Eric is seen working at a giant chronometer dial. A man with a scrap of paper furtively approaches him, whispers: "At 2—at the end of this shift—She has called a meeting."

Once again inside Rotwang's bouse. We see the strange inventor plotting something on a chart. John Masterman must wait on genius, but he does so with unveiled impatience.

A wristwatch is seen, then Eric once more at the dial-machine, then a clock. Eric can scarcely stand on his feet any longer. Near to exhaustion, he slumps to the floor . . . untended bulbs in the machine flicker ominously . . . the

warning thermometer rises to the danger level. As Eric pulls one long hand of the dial down, another slowly rises . . . he tries desperately to control it but it has a will of its own . . . at last he cries aloud, "Father! Father! I did not know 10 hours could be torture!"

Finally a man comes to relieve him.

And—back at Rotwang's abode—at last the genius speaks. He says of the mysterious scraps of paper: "These are the plans of the ancient catacombs."

Thru one of the maps, superimposed, we see a number of workers descending into the grottoes.

"What is down there that interests the workers?" asks Masterman.

For answer, Rotwang goes to a door at one side of the room, mo-

tions Masterman to follow, passes thru, descends some stairs. In an underground chamber, Rotwang lifts a trapdoor in the floor, hands Masterman a hand-torch, and together they descend still further, Rotwang closing the trapdoor above them, all the world like a black spider with a saggy white head.

Rotwang & Masterman proceed to a vantage point, a bolt bewn in the rock thru which they are able to observe an unusual gathering. In this large subterranean meeting place, Maria stands on an altar platform and addresses the workers assembled there. Rotwang & Masterman bear her say: "Today I will tell the story of the Tower of Babel."

TO BE CONTINUED

20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH

all Italy trembles
before the alien terror
of the mighty Ymir.

a fictionization
by Henry Slesar
of Columbia Pictures'
1957 Harryhausen
space-monster thriller.



The sea loved the fishing village of Gerra. It nestled close to it, lapping its white tongues lovingly on the shore; sometimes it touched the little houses of the villagers themselves. In all Sicily, no boasts were made of bigger, fatter tunny than those which wriggled in the nets of the Gerra fishermen, and this proximity was given as the reason.

"It is because we live so close to the sea," Verrico, the strongest man in the village would laugh. "The fish, they come into the house and ask for wine."

But this was happy talk, reserved for happy, carefree hours around red bottles of Marsala and the music of the concertina. When day broke over the Mediterranean, Verrico and all the rest fought hard for their daily catch in their longboats and skiffs, fought with the big nets and the long-hooked poles, and the tuna fought back with all the vigor of their breed.

It was a day no sunnier than all other days, when the fish battled no better or worse than at other times. Verrico, glittering in the sunlight, pulled on the great net, urging his partner Mondello to greater efforts. Mondello, older and shorter, and unwilling to admit to less strength in his arms than Verrico, grunted and wheezed and struggled with the heavy-leaden net. There was a third helper in the boat, too, but he was being of little service.

"Pepe!"

Mondello scowled at the boy who was twisting a small rope idly in his hands, his eyes far from the scene. "Is it your desire that the fish, they swim away? Pull upon the net, little one!"

Pepe looked disgusted, in the way that only a bored eleven-year-old can. He tossed his black hair back from his forehead, and said:

"Fishnets! Many big ropes to catch a little fish!" He sighed, and his voice was jaded by too many years of monotony. "Now in Talxas—that is where one little rope, he catches big cow!"

"Talxas?" Mondello grumbled.

"Talxas? And what is that?"

Pepe smirked. "Ah, Mondello, you know not of Talxas? She is a big country across the sea, near America. She is where the cowboys they—"

"Silencio!"

The command came from Verrico,

whose ears had been listening with amusement, and whose ears now seemed to have caught some strange signal from the depth of the sea itself. "What is it?" Mondello said. Then he, too, stopped.

The men in the longboat ceased their efforts with the net, and looked out to the horizon where the blue sky met the water.

It was a sound.

It was a distant roar, and each moment grew less distant. A roar not of the sea, and unknown to the peaceful sky of Gerra. A sound reminiscent of terrible days under the *fascisti*, but somehow different. A roar that caught the ears and attention of all the fisher-

men of Gerra, who let the tunny escape their nets while they turned their eyes to find the source.

"Look!" Pepe shouted.

The puffy white clouds were hurtling overhead, and spitting forth a silvery object so awesome that a gasp rose in unison from the men in the boats. There were flames spewing out of its tail, and its nose pointed sharply like a silver finger at the waves. Down, down it came, in a steep screaming dive, eager to meet the sea.

Then, painfully, the nose seemed to lift slightly, as if trying to avoid a head-on collision with the hard water. But whatever force guided its movement couldn't sustain the momentary lift, and the object skipped across the smooth surface of the sea like a pebble across a pond, ricocheted, struggled for altitude once more, and then careened into the depths.

In Verrico's boat, the two men and the boy watched in trembling silence, their hands moving unconsciously to cross themselves. Each was muttering brief, hurried prayers, warding off whatever devil had come tumbling from the placid sky.

Now a vast cloud of steam was rising from the fallen object, obscuring its view from the fishermen. For a moment, their fascinated eyes were so tightly held that they failed to see the new danger to their lives. Small tidal waves were rolling out from beneath the hissing cloud, stretching out towards the tiny fishing boats.

"Look out!" Verrico shouted, and his cry was echoed from boat to boat of the fleet. The nets were dropped, and the crews scrambled for the oars.

Verrico leaped for the tiller as a wall of churning water headed straight at their backs. Not far behind him, another fisherman slammed his tiller hard over, turning the how into the sea. But his action came too late; the angry wave broke, and lifted the cargo easily into the air, spilling its passenger into the tumultuous sea. The same action lifted Verrico's craft high, and then lowered it unharmed. He turned and looked back at the men floundering in the water, and saw another of the longboats pulling rapidly to the rescue.

Then the waters were still. And again, the fishermen turned to look at the awesome silvery thing that had fallen from the skies.

Slowly, the hissing steam was subsiding, and they saw the tail of the object projecting steeply from the water.

"It's some kind of ship," Verrico muttered. "It is an aircraft."

"Look," Mondello pointed. "A hole in the side. She cannot stay afloat long."

"Yes. I think we should—"

Mondello didn't wait to hear his next words. He was as strong and as brave as Verrico, and he was willing to declaim that fact to all Sicily, but he feared that his partner had wild and foolish thoughts in his head. He bent busily over the oars, calling to

Pepe to help him. They began stroking the boat to shore, away from the scene of the disaster. The other craft in the fishing fleet were doing the same. There was no dishonor in the action; it was only common sense.

But Verrico, still looking at the aircraft, appeared to be dissatisfied.

"We stop!" he said.

The man and the boy lifted their oars.

"We go back," Verrico told them. "It is a possibility that in the aircraft there may be people."

"But, Verrico!" Mondello was through play-acting; he allowed his horror to show plainly on his face. "That is no usual aircraft. That is nothing like we have known before. There are no people in it!"

Verrico's reply was sarcastic. "Ah, but Mondello, you know this thing you say? You have been perhaps inside it?" He expanded his chest. "What are we—men of the sea, or children?"

Mondello didn't answer.

"We go back," Verrico said.

They turned to the oars once more. Mondello pulled hard, and tried to keep his frightened eyes off the odd vessel in the sea ahead.

They came closer, and closer still. "Closer," Pepe encouraged. "Closer, Mondello."

"Quiet, little one!" Mondello spoke angrily. "We will get there soon enough!"

They were almost upon the thing now, close to the gaping hole in its side, the longboat bumping gently against the floating debris from the wreck. Even Verrico, whose brave features hadn't altered during the slow journey to the stricken airship, seemed no longer certain of what they were doing. When he finally spoke, his voice was hoarse.

"Pepe—the boat hook."

His eyes wide, the boy swallowed hard and lifted the hook. Cautiously, he reached out and hooked it over the edge of the ragged hole torn into the metal of the aircraft, anchoring the boat to the crippled vessel. Verrico stepped to the gunwale, and quickly grasped the topside of the opening with his strong hands.

"You, Mondello," he whispered. "Come with me. It may be I will need your help."

"Why, Verrico? Why me?"

"Do you not boast that you are the bravest man in Sicily?"

Mondello looked miserable. Then he took a deep breath, and followed Verrico through the hole and into the darkness of the aircraft.

The floor inside was slanted by the angle of the ship. It rolled beneath their feet, and they were tipped against the metal bulkheads of the object. It was black as night in the interior of the vessel, but the reflected sunlight from the sea showed them to be in some narrow chamber, whose sides were cluttered with wires, coils, and tubing; things electronic and mysterious and frightening. Every corner of the cham-



Spaceman Shorman (bedded) is dying of some hideous disease contracted on the planet Venus. Nurse (Joan Taylor) tries to dissuade his fellow spaceman (Wm. Hopper) from communicating with him.

ber seemed to be utilized for the storage of scientific equipment or sleeping bunks. Clamped to the far wall, they could see metal cylinders of varied sizes.

One of the clamps was empty.

Verrico moved forward slowly, and Mondello's progress behind him was even slower.

Then—

"Verrico!"

"What is it?"

Mondello pointed.

There was a hand, dangling limply from behind a tangle of shattered equipment. Verrico hastened towards it, and what he saw of the man's face and body caused him to stop and curse aloud. Then, as if the curse was blasphemous even in this unholy atmosphere, the two men crossed themselves and muttered an Ave.

The aircraft shuddered.

"Verrico!"

"Steady," the younger man said hoarsely. The shuddering ceased. He stepped carefully away from the body of the man, and made his way toward a circular hatch with a wheel in its center. He reached over and turned it.

There was the sound of air sucking its way into the chamber, and then a click. The hatch opened.

"Come on," Verrico said. "There may be others."

Reluctantly, Mondello followed.

There were tanks in this chamber, containing strange-smelling fuel. A dangling chain on the roof swung some metal debris back and forth. The two fishermen avoided its menace, and made their way forward.

The next chamber was the last, and its scientific paraphernalia was even more overwhelming and bewildering than the first. Dials, controls, gauges, instruments, wires, tubing—Verrico's head reeled at the sight of it.

But his head cleared when he saw the man in the control chair, hunched over, his arm severely gashed, and still flowing with fresh blood.

Verrico bent over him. At first, the man's face startled him, until he realized that the ugly contours weren't his, but the face of an oxygen mask. He took off the mask, and put his ears to the man's lips.

"This man—he still lives!"

Together, they dragged the unconscious pilot of the strange aircraft

back towards the open hatch. Then Verrico saw still another occupant, strapped to one of the bunks, his mask billowing noisily in erratic tempo.

"Take him out—quickly!" Verrico hurried over to the man on the bunk as the ship's frame shuddered a second time. He drew away the oxygen mask. The thin face revealed beneath it had a wasted, shriveled look that made Verrico mutter. He lifted the slight body from the bunk and carried him out behind his partner.

With Verrico's help, Mondello managed to get the injured pilot into the longboat, and then jump into the boat himself. But just as Verrico was about to leave the yawning hole in the aircraft, a third shudder took hold of the ship. This time, it threw the fisherman and his human burden against the bulkheads. Water began to slosh inside the chamber, and Pepe was shouting:

"Jump, Verrico! The aircraft sinks! Jump!"

But Verrico was determined. He tugged at the unconscious body until he was able to pass it out of the hole to Mondello's eager hand.

"Jump!" Pepe screamed, as the crippled ship trembled once more. The boat-hook slipped from the boy's grasp, and Verrico knew it was now or never. He leaped, but his foot missed the drifting longboat and he plunged into the water. He swam swiftly after it, and the aircraft began vibrating mightily, its girders creaking and protesting.

They hauled him aboard, just as the silver ship emitted a final, grinding groan, and slowly disappeared beneath the surface of the sea.

When they rowed beyond the suction of the churning waters, they put up their oars and looked.

"There must have been more than two men in there," Pepe said brokenly.

"Almost certainly," Verrico answered. "But we could not reach them. May they rest in peace..."

He crossed himself. Overhead, a gull called shrilly, and all was silent and serene again on the wide, blue waters of Sicily.

Chapter 2 THE BEST-LAID PLANS

MAJOR GENERAL A. D. McIntosh had known disappointments before. They had risen in his path like boulders on a highway, and he had learned to face them with the aggressiveness—and sometimes the tactlessness—of a bulldozer.

He had begun his military career at a time when the flying machines were amusing toys, fit only for the war games of men who dreamed a foolish dream of conquest in the air. When the world put Billy Mitchell on trial, he had sat on the side of the prosecution. Then he had learned to dream the same dream, but almost too late. He had served with the Air Force in World War II, when he was already too old for combat flying. He had served in Korea, yet never entered a jet except for transport purposes. Then his appointment to the Global Air Force came, and he thrilled again to the challenge it raised.

And now...
He stood at the window of the Pentagon Building, a bull-necked, heavy-set man, his hands locked behind his back. There was emotion in the General's face, but he was reluctant to let the others see it exposed.

Dr. Judson Uhl respected the General's feeling, and waited quietly until the mood passed. He was a civilian scientist, and perceptive enough to know that even a General's uniform can cover a troubled soul.

Strangely enough, General A. D. McIntosh had been one of the last of the key men informed of the project that was known cryptically as Project XY. It had begun as a civilian dream, born in the great white shells of astronomical observatories, nurtured in the antiseptic laboratories of industry and government, blue-printed by civilian scientists and engineers. A vast dream indeed.

He had dreamed of the project on the day when an official visitor from Washington arrived at the General's headquarters, a visitor carrying sealed letters signed by the President himself.

General McIntosh frowned when he saw the man. He was the antithesis of everything military: slumish, weak-eyed, balding man with nervous hands and an apologetic manner. His name had been Judson Uhl, and he had the title of Doctor.

"To tell you the truth," Dr. Uhl had grinned shyly, "I hardly know why I have been chosen as emissary in this matter. I'm a lot more comfortable in a laboratory, General McIntosh."

McIntosh grunted in silent agreement.

"Well, get to the point, Dr. Uhl. What's your business?"

"Rockets," the man said pleasantly.

"I see. Well, I know a little about rockets myself, Doctor."

"Not this kind perhaps, General. I'm speaking of a man-carrying rocket. One equipped to hold a crew of fifteen to twenty men, able to be launched into outer space for a trip of several months duration."

McIntosh stared at him.

"I've heard that pipe dream before, Doctor. Maybe fifty years from now, a hundred, all right. But now—"

"Yes, General," Dr. Uhl said cheerfully. "Now."

"Am I supposed to take you seriously?"

"I think so. Because the fact of the matter is this, General. Whatever talk you've heard of man-carrying rocket ships, and proposed space investigations—well, they didn't tell you the whole story. The truth is that such a vessel can be completed now, within a year."

"And that is the proposed plan?"

"That is the accepted plan, General."

McIntosh's pulse was racing. But he composed his features and said:

"A moon trip, Doctor? Or another space satellite?"

"Neither. Certain recent events have caused us to abandon our 'one-step-at-a-time' policy, General. Not only do we have the means to make an interplanetary journey—we now have the reason."

"What reason?"

"You may have heard of the recent findings released by the Palomar Observatory. The complete details are still classified, but I can say this much. The planet Venus has revealed to our spectroscopic equipment the presence of a group of valuable minerals—essential minerals to the full development of atomic power."

The General grunted. "And these means you talk about. You really think we know enough to launch a ship to Venus? To bypass the idea of an orbital satellite? Or an exploratory moon trip?"

"We know enough," Dr. Uhl said blandly. "It's been my pleasure, for the last eighteen months, to head up a scientific commission called Project XY. That commission now has the

completed blueprint for the first spaceship, General. I trust it's the first." The General looked at him sharply. "Russia?"

"We doubt it very much."

"And where does the Global Air Force fit into this scheme of yours?"

"Just where you'd think, General. The USAF will take full charge of the actual expedition: arrange the flight, man the ship, launch it, and so forth. It was the President's personal recommendation that you be the man to head up the endeavor."

The General stood up. He didn't say anything for a full ten seconds. When he did speak, there was a hushed quality in his normally gruff voice.

"I wonder if you know what this means to me," he said.

"I hope it means you're happy and excited," Dr. Uhl said. "Just as I am." Then he began to bustle with the locks on his briefcase. "But we don't have time to talk about how happy we are, General. We've got work to do."

There had been a great deal of work, and never did the days of General A. D. McIntosh go by with more speed or more satisfaction. The problems of constructing the huge space vessel were well in the hands of several hundred scientists and engineers, and his advice was rarely needed on that score. But there were a thousand other matters concerning the voyage that demanded the voyage that demanded his attention. One of the most irritating was a matter that occurred seven months after construction of the XY-21 was underway.

The finest security blanket in the history of the nation had been thrown over the entire project, but there were certain factions in the Government to whom the spaceship and its destination were no secret. One of these factions was a very powerful Congressional committee originally formed to investigate foreign aid expenditures. How its authority extended to Project XY remained a mystery to General McIntosh, who had never been politically-minded. But the effect of that authority, and the antagonism of the Senator who chaired the committee, became one of his gravest problems.

He met Senator Brown at a cocktail party, a week before the official opening of the Congressional hearings, and the Senator smiled amiably and drew him aside.

Banyon was a handsome man, with silvery white hair and long sideburns. Had the General been more alert to the ways and means of political ambition, he might have recognized in the Senator a man who knew his way around a spotlight.

"This is an exciting business, General," Banyon had said smoothly. "I envy you your little project."

"Little project?" McIntosh growled. "I'd hardly call it that, Senator. It may well be the most important project in the world's history."



All eyes skyward as the menace of the monster from the sunward planet grows hourly more dangerous for Earth.

"Ah, yes. I should know that, of course. All you spacemen use the same phrase, don't you? 'Most important event in human history...' That sort of excuses a lot, doesn't it, General?" He smiled innocently.

"I don't know what you mean."

"I think you do. The whole concept of space travel is so awesome, so magnificent, so courageous—it's difficult for anyone, say an insignificant Congressman—to criticize the project without appearing, shall we say, reactionary?"

The General sighed. "We'll talk about it at the hearings, Senator. I came here to enjoy myself."

"Naturally, naturally. But I thought, General, that if we got to know each other a little, that might expedite matters a little. I'll make no secret as to

what our line of inquiry will be next week. Money for one thing. I understand that the project cost is already well over a hundred and fifty million dollars. That's a lot of taxpaying, General. Even you can see that."

"Money isn't my business, Senator."

"No, of course not. But it's mine. These precious minerals you talk about on Venus—I wonder if they're worth a hundred and fifty million, General. Even if they are present in any quantity, they must still be mined and shipped. And who can say what conditions will prevail on the planet? If they make a successful landing. All sorts of problems intrude, don't they, Senator?" He laughed pleasantly.

"There are other compensations," the General grumbled. "There's strategic value to the trip. Military value."

"Oh? Such as what?"

McIntosh was angry—more with himself than the Senator. He was on the defensive, arguing, whining. He controlled himself and said:

"Let's save it for the hearings, Senator. I'm going inside."

"Certainly, General." Banyon put his hand on McIntosh's shoulder. "Anything you say. No reason for us to personally be at odds, eh?"

The private hearings on the subject of Project XY was probably the most trying period in the General A. D. McIntosh's career. The testimony of the scientists and engineers was forthright and unemotional. His own testimony on the military and tactical benefits of the Venus trip was grueling. By the end of the four-week round of questioning, it began to appear as if

Project XY was in mortal danger, even before the ship was launched.

Then, just as the rumors were blackest from Capitol Hill, there were reports of high-level maneuvers from the White House—and all investigation was ended.

Senator Banyon didn't seem chagrined at the decision. He was as pleasant as ever to General McIntosh, and the General was acute enough to realize that Banyon had lost nothing in political standing.

Then a new problem arose to over-

and education, psychological aptness and that indeterminate quality of spirit that was needed for such an endeavor.

"We must have dedicated men aboard this ship," Dr. Sharman, the chief medical officer of the project told the General. "They must believe in this voyage with all their body, their mind, and their soul. It's the only way."

The General's eyes twinkled.

"Soul, Dr. Sharman?"

"Yes, General. There are many scientists who believe more intensely in the soul of man than layman do. They

examinations. Suppose we form a three-man committee: myself, yourself, and Dr. Uhl. We may be able to find the men."

"We'll try it," the General said. He lifted some papers from his desk. "Then here's a candidate we can pass judgment on right now. Intelligence report—excellent. Education—excellent. Psychological report—excellent. Medical report—only fair. This is an important man in an important position. The man is a botanist, a zoologist, and a physician of note; his knowledge



shadow all others. The problem of the crew.

Some eight hundred of the Air Force's best men had been recruited in an attempt to find the seventeen that would eventually make the journey.

At the end of three months of intensive testing and examinations, Project XY found itself with only six acceptable candidates—six men who met the high standards of physical strength, coordination and endurance, intelligence and adaptability, knowledge

and education, psychological aptness and more reason to have faith. Some of them give it different names, but the essential faith is there."

"That won't solve our problem," the General said glumly. "We can't find the right men to meet the standards we've set as it is. Either we relax those standards—"

"No," Sharman said. "We can't afford to have one poor candidate aboard that ship, General; he could mean the death of the others and the death of our expedition. But I suggest we let a little human judgment into the

will be very helpful."

"And the fair medical report?"

"He didn't do well in the gyroscope tests. Blacked out before the required number of g's. But that doesn't mean he won't survive the flight, of course." He grinned at the Doctor. "No, Dr. Sharman, I think you'll survive it fine."

Sharman flushed.

"Thank you, General. I will plan on surviving..."

In the Pentagon office, General Mc-

Intosh turned around.

Without looking at the two men in the room, he strode to the huge relief map that covered one wall of the sparsely-furnished office. He glowered at it, and jammed his thumb into the middle of the Mediterranean.

"From all indications, she's splashed in somewhere right here." And he added bitterly: "Twenty thousand leagues under the sea."

"Perhaps not, General," Dr. Uhl said hopefully. "It may be that Colonel

five hundred feet per minute." He jabbed at the Mediterranean again. "Sorry, Doctor—but that puts her down with the fish."

Dr. Uhl stared glumly at the map, and turned away. Quickly, his voice controlled, he said: "What makes me cry inside is that it was so close. So very, very close. They made it there. They almost made it back. And—"

The telephone rang, and the Major hurried to answer.

"Major Stacey speaking."

a few kilometers off the coast of a fishing village named Gerra! Some fishermen saw it."

His blunt finger rode over the map. It searched desperately until its stubby tip came finally to rest.

"Here it is!"

He turned to them swiftly. "All right, Major. We'll need the cooperation and courtesy of the Italian Government, so get the State Department on the phone. Tell them we've got a green light from the White House, and tell



Calder regained control."

"I appreciate your optimism, Doctor. But that's the way it reads. Just like that."

He traced his finger downward from Iceland across to France.

"We got a radar blip on her just off Iceland, two hundred miles altitude. Rate of descent—" He turned to his aide. "What was it, Major Stacey?"

"Thirty-five hundred feet per minute, sir."

"Another sighting from Stillman in Marseilles. Rate of descent—still thirty-

His face began to brighten the moment the metallic voice on the other end began to speak. He was almost grinning when he said: "Hold it! Tell the General!"

McIntosh snatched the receiver out of his hand.

"McIntosh . . . Yes? . . . Where? Is that confirmed? . . . Thank you!"

"What is it?" Dr. Uhl said, trying to hold down his exuberance. He looked up.

"She's down off Sicily, Doctor!" He walked briskly back to the map. "Only

them to get the Italian Embassy to clear a path for us."

Dr. Uhl grinned. "You better tell 'em we're in a hurry. Tell them to roll up their red tape and put it in a drawer and lock it up until this thing is over."

"Yes, sir!" Stacey said, grinning the while.

"One more thing," the General continued. "Tell them Dr. Uhl and I want to leave and we want to leave now. For Sicily!"

THE MONSTER EMERGES

NEVER had the fishermen of Gerra drawn such a curious catch from the sea. They gathered on the shore, huzzing and exclaiming, as Verrico and the others removed the two rescued men from the heached longboat to stretchers. The Commissario di Polizia, resplendent in his trim uniform, at last had his opportunity to demonstrate what a truly efficient man he was in a crisis.

"Take them to the Commune di Gerra," he said. "Quickly! And you, Mondello. Fetch the doctor! Suhito!"

"SI, Signore Commissario!"

Mondello turned and ran, and the police chief whipped a notepad from his hip pocket and looked at Verrico. He jotted things down.

"You were inside the wreck. Were there only these two men aboard?"

"SI, I was inside with Mondello, and we saw one more man. But he was of a certainly dead." Verrico shrugged, with great sadness. "But Signore Commissario—that ship of the air, she was so big, so vast, that surely there must have been other men inside, too."

"They looked at each other, two men of great soul and understanding, and their hearts were heavy."

Neither of them noticed Pepe, who was staring at the shoreline.

At first, he saw what appeared to be a dark bit of cloth, a floating garment of some kind. There was something else bobbing beside it, a metallic object. But the bit of cloth was in Pepe's eyes, and he began to wade swiftly into the water.

He picked up the cloth thing. It was a leather jacket, still handsome and shining despite its soaking. He turned it around admiringly, covetously, and when he saw the initials USAF stenciled on the back, his face mirrored pure delight. Hurdled, he wrung the water from the flying jacket, and looked around for other exciting discoveries in the debris of the fallen aircraft.

For a moment, he saw nothing but splinters of wood. Then, on the beach, he saw the flash of sunlight on metal, and he moved towards the object eagerly.

It was a cylinder, and the magic letters of the USAF were stamped on it, too. He picked it up; the surprising weight almost toppled him over. One end of the thing had clamps that secured the cap tightly; it resisted Pepe's young fingers.

On the shore, a new problem was coming to the attention of the Commissario. Mondello returned from his errand with bad news.

"Commissario!" Mondello was wheezing, winded from his long run. "The doctor, he is not at home. He is far over at the Signora Martinelli's who is immediately to have a bambino. Perhaps twins as before, who knows? And the Signora Martinelli—he is a very sick man."

Soberly, the police chief said: "That

is had. Those men are in great need of—" He stopped. "One moment! There is that old doctor from Roma, traveling with his American granddaughter. Is he still here?"

The villagers shook their heads at the question.

Verrico said: "The man with the house on wheels? Pepe would know."

He cupped his hands to his mouth and called to the boy at the water's edge. "Pepe!" Then he looked at the Commissario and chuckled. "Pepe sells him worthless shellfish. Or anything else of no value. Pepe!"

The boy was startled by the call. He was just at the point of success with the cylinder's stubborn cap when Verrico's shout interrupted.

"Pepe!"

He looked wildly about for a place to hide his prize. He was forced to settle for a clump of sand and went running to answer the call.

"SI, Verrico? You need me?"

"That old doctor from Rome who



Animator Ray Harryhausen (left) makes pained face in reaction to Editor Ackerman's kidding question.

"How did you get a man into that monster suit?", knowing full well Harryhausen wouldn't substitute a man in a suit for an animated model even if you gave him the opportunity to play King Kong himself

travels here. Do you know where he is?"

"Dr. Leonardo? He is camped on the Via Messina—only a small kilometer beyond the residence of Signore Greppi."

The Commissario turned to Mondello. "You are aware of this place?"

"But of course."

"Good. Beg the doctor to make haste."

Mondello nodded, and ran off once more.

In Pepe's eyes, there was relief. Now he could return to his find, to his metal cylinder with the fine letters of the American Air Force stamped across it! Who knows what wonders it held? Wonders of the great America. Perhaps even wonders of Taixas!

He picked up the object, its clamp now removed, and tilted it towards the sand.

The gelatinous hloh moved slowly out of its prison, oozing its way forward with every shake of Pepe's arm. until it finally dropped softly onto

the sand.

Pepe stared at it, both fascinated and repelled.

It was about fifteen inches long, bulky, and sand was clinging to its slick, wet-looking surface.

The boy tossed the cylinder aside and reached out to touch the thing with his finger. Squeamishly, he yanked it back just at the point of contact. The thing didn't react to the touch, so he tried it again.

Satisfied that the hloh was inanimate, Pepe picked it up and brought it to the water. He dipped the thing in the surf to wash it of clinging sand, and looked at his prize once more.

It was smooth and semi-transparent. There was something inside, something vague and shadowy, but nothing that Pepe's young eyes could identify. He frowned at it in deep thought, and then was struck with an idea.

"Dr. Leonardo!" he said aloud.

His face radiant, he picked up the flying jacket and wrapped it cozily around the gelatinous mass. He ran off, his head whirling with exciting plans and prospects for the future.

Maria Leonardo had long ago despaired of setting up normal housekeeping in her grandfather's trailer. It wasn't that the mobile home was cramped or uncomfortable; no, it was a perfect miniature of a cottage. She herself had picked out the furniture and accessories in Rome, not trusting her old grandfather to show good decorating sense.

"If you must live like a gypsy," she had told him, with an affectionate smile on her face, "then you can at least travel in comfort."

He had smiled back and patted her hand.

"All right, little mother. But you must remember that I need working room, too. You must not clutter up my little rolling laboratory with antimacassars and potted plants."

Now, three years later, Marisa stood in the trailer and brushed her glossy black hair away from her pretty, green-eyed face, and sighed. Her grandfather's zoological equipment dominated and overran even the living quarters of the mobile house. The truck that pulled the trailer wasn't enough to hold the accumulation of gear that Dr. Leonardo traveled with. His field utensils, his test tubes, his microscope, his mounted sea specimens were everywhere.

Marisa surveyed the clutter hopelessly, but there was no strong disapproval in her glance. He could never disapprove of her grandfather, or of anything that belonged to him. She owed him too much: she loved him too much.

Marisa's parents had been killed when she was eight, when the bombs were falling to destroy the remnants of Il Duce's fascist machine. Her grandfather, Dr. Leonardo, had struggled through the poverty-stricken years that followed to provide a life for himself and his grandchild. As she grew older, her skill and tenderness with the



Outer space creature faces earth elephant in the strangest battle of the 20th century.

sick created a desire for medical training. Somehow, Dr. Leonardo managed the means to send the girl to America, where relatives could care for her and see to her training in the fine medical universities of the great United States. In another year, she, too, would be called Doctor.

Marisa had worked hard. Herscholarship had eased the financial strain, enough to permit a long-awaited visit home. So why worry if the furniture was not so fine and polished any longer? Or if sea-things were crawling beneath the unmade bed.

She laughed and set about to straighten the rumpled sheets.

In the next room, Dr. Leonardo heard the knock first. His gentle, scholarly face lifted from the study he was making of an overgrown snail. He went to the door and opened it.

"Dr. Leonardo?"

The man breathed a relieved sigh. He was stocky and strong, and there was anxiety in his face.

"I am Mondello, the fisherman. Come now, quickly! A great aircraft fell into the sea—a terrible tragedy—and the two men, they need you now!"

The Doctors stared blankly at him, and Marisa came in.

"What is it, grandfather?"

"I do not know yet. Slowly, my friend. Do I understand that there has been an air crash in your village, and men have been hurt?" He was trying hard to comprehend.

"Si, si! And Dottore Bonini, the only one we have, he is with the Signora Martinelli, who is about to have twins, triplets—perhaps more! Who can know?"

The Doctor shook his white head.

"I fear I would be of no help. I am a doctor of zoology, not medicine. But my granddaugbter, it is possible

—"He turned to her. "Marisa?"

She looked surprised, and Mondello turned his face eagerly towards her.

"Signorina! You are the doctor of people with hurts?"

"Not yet," she said. "Not for another year."

The sick look of disappointment was plain on Mondello's face. Marisa hesitated, and then said:

"All right. I'll do the best I can."

There were visions in Pepe's head, and there were sounds, too. Sounds of horses' hooves and six-shooters and the cry of the cowmen as they hooted at the scampering cattle on the plains of the great country of Texas. A rustler, with a villainous black moustache, was aiming his gun at the hero, a white-suited cowboy on an equally white horse. The hero's features were surprisingly like Pepe's own. Just as the villain raised his gun, the hero's right hand darted to his gunbelt swifter than lightning. Crack! The rustler clutched his midriff and fell to the ground.

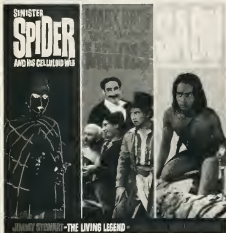
Pepe came within sight of the truck and trailer, nestled snugly inside a pleasant grove, with its array of bird

(Continued on page 40)

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NO. 10, P. 100

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Meet CAPT. NEIL PATTERSON (Eric Fleming) of the United States Rocket Squadron. His mission—save the Earth of 1985 from the Beta Disintegrator about to be aimed at it from the vicinity of Venus by the QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE (Allied Artists, CinemaScope & De Luxe Color, 1959).



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author of this present article.

The Illustrated Martian Himself comes
for the Firsttime to the pages of Any
Imagi-Movie Magazine with Opinions &
Information of Interest & Concern to
Every Science-Fantasy Film Fancier



Drew Pearson displays drawing of spacesuited Michael Rennie in film much admired by Ray Bradbury, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (20th-Fox 1951).

the empathy machine

The connections between the cinema and science fiction should be many and constant.

This is a science fiction era we live in and the cinema is a science fictional device, that is, a machine which, only a few short years ago, would have been looked upon as impossible, miraculous, beyond the ken of the ordinary person or even the extraordinary person.

But now—suddenly—this one "empathy" machine has been given into

the hands of mankind, whereby, if used well, we can:

Find ourselves in the body of a white man if we are black . . .

. . . the body of a black man if we if we are white

We can be Baptist while remaining Catholic:

We can be woman and remain man

We can be the dwarf while we are 6' tall

Ugly if handsome and handsome if ugly.

So with this one "machine" alone much in the world has already been changed, in good, and in bad directions.

the projection machine and the power

Hitler used this invention to empathize attention to a false image of Germany. It follows that any invention is a means to power and therefore, since we live among robots, one would imagine we would be curious about the ideas embodied in our machines, how they came about, and how they were fixed immutably in steel and plastic.

But, surprisingly, there has been little contact between the idea-in-the-machine and one of the machines—cinema—*itself*.

This is a great loss to us all.

For—

our robot children

—Unless we continually examine our dilemma, man teamed about by robots, we cannot hope to remember that these devices out of Wells & Verne are our own children and must be called to order and summoned to better directions.

This, it seems to me, would make for exciting filmmaking.

The field is almost untouched.

favorite scientifilms

There have been a number of s.f. movies which are valid and important.

THINGS TO COME, in its day, was far ahead of its time and, if memory serves me, quite remarkable.

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL strikes me as a fine attempt to speak to mankind today about its problems on Earth.

My own outline and treatment (I was not allowed to work on the screenplay) became a moderately good movie *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*, tho it must be admitted the theme of the film—"a thing may look hostile but not necessarily be hostile"—was more important than the film itself, due to the studio feeling it had to inject close-ups of the monsters, which frightened no one and thus watered down the impact.

BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER would have been an s.f. film 30 years ago . . . as it is it takes the materials of s.f. right up to the edge of Space for a moving experience all around; a fine job by David Lean.

FORBIDDEN PLANET's main idea is of a Herman Melville and much of the latter part of the film is most exciting both as to concept and technical execution. Unfortunately the film is marred by mediocre performances, di-



rection and writing, which include the usual "female mush" and assorted vulgarities having to do with Robby the Robot. I have rarely envied a concept as much as this one, however, and would have loved to have had a chance to write about the "Id that all unknowingly rears itself up in monster form to destroy man." Truly, this is an idea worthy of attention, and it is regrettable it was shunted off into the hands of incompetents.

There may be a dozen other s.f. films I cannot recall now, this morning, of good quality. If I have forgotten them for the time being, I hope to be forgiven by those who remember.



FORBIDDEN PLANET: in Bradbury's estimation, unfortunately not nearly the imaginative exercise it might have been.



Bradbury found *THINGS TO COME* "quite remarkable." Here monster tank destroys a building during the World War II that Wells predicted.

Rare still of Ernest Thesiger as Theotocapulos in *THINGS TO COME*, role in which he was later replaced by Sir Cedric Hardwicke.



bradbury's film ambitions

I would like to see my "The Martian Chronicles" done, in Todd-AO or Cinerama. I have a great enthusiasm for Cinerama and feel it has yet to be tested in the right directions with proper materials.

I would also like to do a trio or quartet of my s.f. stories, especially stories like "The Veldt", "The Pedestrian", "Zero Hour", etc. etc.

Before I die, God willing many years from now, I would like to work for the following directors: David Lean, Kurosawa, Fellini, Bergman and Zinneman.

I have already had the great pleasure of working one entire summer with Sir Carol Reed, on the s.f. short novel "And the Rock Cried Out". Sir Carol and I have tried to get financing on this for many years, since 1957, but because of its political nature we have never been able to move the project. He is an admirable man and I would like to work with him again.

I would also like to work with Jack Clayton, whom I met while working on *MOBY DICK*.

I am looking forward, now, to Truffaut's production of *FAHRENHEIT 451* with great excitement. I am sure he will do an absolutely fantastic job.



"Far ahead of its time," said Bradbury of **THINGS TO COME**. This super-city scene was 100 years in the future at the release date.

I hope to work with Truffaut again, this time directly, on a trio or quartet.

the mind molders

My literary forefathers are Wells, Verne, Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. Rider Haggard, Sax Rohmer, Aldous Huxley, Victor Appleton who wrote the *s.f. Tom Swift* series in my childhood, L. Frank Baum who wrote the *Oz* books, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, Wm. Faulkner, Thos. Wolfe, John Collier, Ernest Hemingway & Jessamyn West.

sci-fi a la Ray

I have a very personal definition of *s.f.* which means man lost in the maze of his machineries and how to find a way out to light again.

I am not interested in how to build an atom bomb but only in how to use the power of the atom to build man into a better shape.

To guess possible futures based on possible machines which sum up mankind's philosophies in portable concretized shapes is the business of *s.f.* writers.

But, again, I would prefer not to guess machines so much as man's reactions to said machines.



"One of my literary forefathers was Edgar Rice Burroughs"—Bradbury.

ORBITUARY DEPARTMENT

TELL STAR, tell scene, tell monster, tell movie title—tell any request you have for a look again at old space pix and we'll five it up for you on these pages! Address your request via telegram, Telstar or special delivery letter to Dept. 45J, **SPACE-MEN**, 915 So. Sherbourne Dr., Los Angeles, Calif. 90035.



ATLANTIS, THE LOST CONTINENT is noted in legend for its super-science. Here, in Geo. Pal's 1961 version of adventure in the sunken world, is another look at some of the amazing machinery. Far **HENRY EICHNER, L.E. DONNE & ALVIN GERMESHAUSEN.**



The Giant from Space seen (semi-transparently) in Allied Artists' **ATTACK OF THE 50-FOOT WOMAN** (1958). Far **KURT LEHMAN, CAROL FRENCH & GERALD SARAUER.**



Laurie (the Gory) Mitchell just can't do a thing with her face—or her arms, either—as she's captured in the not-so-fond embrace of Dave Willock in *QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE*. Shown for **STEVE PEARLSON, MARK FREEMAN & GUY GUDEN**, this dramatic struggle from Allied Artists' 1958 space opera.



THE SPACE CHILDREN (Paramount 1958) strike again for LAWRENCE ARCHULETA, PETE CLAUDIUS, DAWN SUSOEFF & CAROL WALD.

Real Orbituary material!
THE 3 STOOGES IN ORBIT
are about to get blasted
by menacing Martian
monsters. We hope you
readers get as big a blast
out of this pic as WILL
MALCOTTS, FRAN KEY-
LARK & JULIE BLACK.



Weird interplanetary
landscape of BATTLE OF
THE WORLDS shown far
for the benefit of KEN MED-
WAY, DELLA REY & JOHN
STONE.



(Continued from page 27)
and animal cages hanging outside. He barely noticed the pretty young algerina hurrying out, carrying a small black bag, accompanying Mordeello down the road. He had too much on his mind, and it all had to do with the strange almy thing wrapped in the flying jacket.

"Good afternoon!"
He looked up to see Dr. Leonardo, his good friend and finest customer. "Well, my young merchant friend. And what is it you wish to sell me today; at an exorbitant rate, I am certain. An inedible clam, perhaps?"
"Ah, Dr. Leonardo, you make one big mistake. Here I have not a clam. I have a treasure!"

The Doctor hid the amusement on his face.

"With which, no doubt, you are willing to part for very, very little money?" He gestured towards the trailer door. "Come inside, my little Sicilian bandit—and we'll bargain."

Within the room, the Doctor beckoned the boy to one of the camp chairs. But Pepe stood still, clutching his treasure tightly.

"Dr. Leonardo, you are a kind man, a man of much learning. And a man of great wealth."

"A man of wealth! A professor of—"
He smiled ruefully, remembering the kind of world a boy lives in. "Of course, Pepe. All things are relative. Continue."

"You have two hundred lira?"

"There is a possibility," the Doctor said solemnly, "that I have such a fortune." He put his hand out towards the flying jacket. "Now may I see this new treasure of so great value?"

Pepe drew back. "You have two hundred lira with you, in your purse?"

"It is a true fact, Pepe. But why is your need so great, so urgent?"

"Because. With two hundred lira I can purchase the hat from Talxas. Please—may I have the money now?"

"The hat from Talxas?"

Pepe drew a circle around his head. "It is the hat the cowboy wears when he shoots the bandit, bang! Bang! And the man he is dead." He shipped out two imaginary guns and fired them.

The Doctor nodded. "Ah, those American films. With so great a need, Pepe, you may have the hat for free. But I warn you—I'd better get my money's worth." His gentle face mimicked a movie villain. "Or 'I'm a comedian' after you."

Dr. Leonardo took out his purse and peeled off two hundred lira. Pepe looked at them joyfully.

"And now when I have purchased this treasure of great splendor?"

Pepe was hardly interested in that side of the transaction any longer. Contentedly, he unrolled the cloth and put the gelatinous mass on the Doctor's work bench.

Dr. Leonardo looked at it with only mild curiosity; the sea produces many odd things.

Then he examined it closer, with

increasing interest. He prodded it, turned it over. He became so absorbed in the thing that he didn't notice Pepe's hasty departure through the trailer doors.

"Strange," he said to himself. "There seems to be something inside. Something with form. But what class does it belong to? Pepe, tell me where you—"
He looked up and saw the empty room.

Hurriedly, he went to the door, shouting for the boy. Down the road, Pepe turned, his hand holding tight to the pocket where the money was.

"Hi, Dr. Leonardo?"

"Please tell me! Where did you find this thing?"

"In the water, Doctor! In the sea!"

Dr. Leonardo watched him run, and he shook his white-haired head with a wry smile on his lips.

Behind him, on the work bench, the blob from the USAF cylinder quivered once, and again.

Then it was silent.

The Commune di Gerra was a huddling of many moods and purposes, and its hoary stones told the story of the ancient village of Gerra on the island of Sicily. It was a poor building, as its village was poor. It was old, as its village was old. Yet it was strong and stubborn in its construction. It had weathered war and famine and the slow decay of the years, but still it stood—a home for the Mayor of Gerra, the office of the Commissario of Police, and a hospital for the sick.

On the hospital floor, in one large barren room, there were three cots. One was empty. The other two held the unconscious bodies of the men taken from the stricken aircraft.

The younger of the pair, his wounds swathed in professional handgazes around his head and arm, lay breathing normally.

The other man was less fortunate. An oxygen tank had been placed near his head, and a small face mask covered his mouth.

Marisa Leonardo picked up his limp wrist and tried his pulse again. She listened implacably to the sound of his heavy, erratic breathing, and put the wrist back on the bed. It dropped like a weight.

Then she looked into the man's contorted face, and his expression was painful. She remembered the worst dream she had featured such a mangled, tortured face of this. What had happened to the man? What nightmare was upon him?

A grunting sound came from the other cot. She got up and went to the younger man. His eyes were shut, but his head was beginning to move on the pillow. She tried his pulse, and at her touch, his eyes struggled open.

She said: "I know. You want to know where you are, don't you? You're in Sicily, in a village called Gerra."
"Gerra?"

"Southern Sicily. A fishing village." She touched his wrist and smiled professionally.

"About where we figured," he said



vaguely. Then his expression changed, and he strained to sitting position.

"The others? How are they?"

She answered gently. "I'm told that your aircraft is at the bottom of the sea. Whoever else was on it . . . She watched him fall back wearily. "Except, of course, this gentleman here. And his condition is critical—very critical."

The man looked at the other cot. When he saw its occupant, he forced his feet over the side of the cot.

"I'm sorry," Marisa said, "but I'm afraid you're in a very bad condition. You're in no condition to—"
"Let me alone!" He pushed her away rudely, clutching the side of the cot for support. He got up weakly and tottered towards the other bed.

"Please, you mustn't—"

But there was determination on the young man's lean, intense face. He

pushed over the unconscious man and put his mouth to his unheeding ear.

"Doctor!" he shouted. "Dr. Sharman!"

Vainly, Marisa tried to pull him away, but he was strong and stubborn. "I must ask you to leave this man alone. He's extremely ill—"
"Please! Dr. Sharman, can you hear me?"

"If you don't stop, I'll call for help—"
The man whirled on her, his face infuriated. There was a depth of anger in his eyes that she wasn't used to seeing, a grim preoccupation that transcended everything else.

"Listen, nurse, leave me alone! I'm in no mood to—"
"I'm not a nurse!" she said loudly.

"I'm a doctor—or almost a doctor—and this man may be dying!"

The young man took a deep breath, as if fighting for patience. "All right, almost-a-doctor. Do you know what's wrong with him?"

"No—not exactly."

"Well, I do! I know what's wrong with him, and I know it's fatal. Eight of my crew have already died of the same thing. Now if you must stay here, stand still and be quiet. Understand?"

Marisa's eyes widened, and she gasped. Just slightly, her arm raised as if it involuntarily desired to strike the insulting young stranger across his face. She glared back at him, but he wasn't interested in her reaction. He was bending over the dying man, calling:

"Sharman! Dr. Sharman! Can

you hear me?"

Then the man moved.

His movement was slight, but his young friend became excited, and shouted louder.

"Doctor!"

The words that came from the distorted lips were hardly audible.

"Are we . . . are we going to make . . . make it back?"

"We are back! We're on Earth!"

"The specimen! Is it all right?"

"I—I don't know. We crashed into the Mediterranean. I suppose everything went down with the wreck." He

paused. "The others are dead."

The man he called Sharman shut his eyes tightly. He tried to speak once more, but there wasn't enough breath in his lungs. His hand inched

upwards, making its way into his coat. It emerged with a notebook.

"Make them . . . make them find it . . . my notes . . ."

He began to gasp for breath. Marisa, watching with hypnotized eyes, came closer.

"How long can it live?" the young man was saying. "How long can it live in the cylinder, Dr. Sharman? I've got to know. It's our only hope."

There was no answer. Swiftly, the man grabbed for the oxygen face mask and slapped it over his friend's mouth. The breath came easier, but still faintly. "Please," Marisa said, almost in a whisper.

He looked up, all the anger dissipated. "It's okay," he said. "I'll be all right."

"You're suffering from shock and exhaustion. You better lie down."

"Sure," the man said casually, and then almost collapsed on the cot.

Briskly, Marisa opened the bag on the table and removed a hypodermic needle.

"What were you talking about? What specimen? What fatal disease? I don't understand any of this."

"You don't. And you won't."

She made an exasperated noise. "You make a wonderful patient. Courteous. Cooperative. Informative. Altogether a joy and a pleasure to have around."

She lifted the needle. "This'll give you pleasant dreams. If you're capable of them."

She was drawing it away when the sudden silence in the room caught their attention. For a moment, she looked baffled, and then realized that the sound of Sharman's erratic breathing had ended.

She turned her head and looked at the younger man. There was no surprise on his face. She got up hastily and went to Sharman's side, reaching for his wrist.

"He—he's dead."

"I know."

She was shocked by the answer. Her voice was hard when she spoke to him again.

"Do you mind explaining all or some of this?"

"I'm sorry . . ." His voice was thick with the effects of the drug. "But I can't . . ."

"Can't? Or won't?"

He yawned widely. "Both . . ."

His head rolled over on the pillow. Marisa walked over to him, her features moving in anger and frustration. She began to put her instruments back in the bag, but stopped again to look at her patient. He was deep in a drugged sleep, his breathing regular, his face relaxed. His features were altered now, no longer contorted by wrath. Marisa's eyes softened. He was actually handsome, and somehow vulnerable in sleep. She moved to a table piled high with blankets and snook one out. She covered him tenderly, tucking it in around his shoulders. Then she hunched back the tumbled brown hair from his forehead.

It was the same moon outside.

It had shone softly over Sicily when Marisa was a child. It had followed her to America, silvery-white and perfect over the campus of the medical school. But tonight, hanging low over the trees of Gerra, the moon seemed brighter and more romantic than Marisa Leonardo had ever known it. She followed its path down the road that led back to her grandfather's trailer, and there was a small smile on her pretty face.

But the moon wasn't shining for her alone. Its beams slanted through the window of the mobile home and picked out the shiny form of the gelatinous blob on the Doctor's work bench.

The strange shape inside the mass had more definition now. It began to move, to shift, to struggle.

Slowly, a crack formed in the slick surface. It grew longer, wider.

Then, something hurtled through the shell. A tiny fist, with three talon-like fingers.

Strangely, Marisa wasn't tired. Her mind was active, thinking rapidly, puzzling over the strange words she had heard spoken inside the Commune di Gerra. She knew that the two rescued men in the hospital ward were members of the United States Air Force, and their mission had been one of danger and importance. But what had caused so many deaths among the crew? And what unknown plague had tormented the dead man's features?

With a sigh, she put down her surgical bag and began to shrug off her jacket.

The peculiar sibilant noise startled her.

She whirled, and the sight of the thing on the work bench drained the blood from her face. She stifled a scream in her throat, and stared.

It was some fifteen inches high, and the moonlight delineated its grotesque reptilian shape. It's incredibly long, lizard-like tail swished behind it; its head was nightmarish, like that of a medieval dragon's. It waved its three-toed hands helplessly in the air, and hissed at her as if in fright.

Marisa stood rooted to the spot, watching the creature's frightened eyes. It began to hack away, as if fearful of an attack. Her hand went out automatically and flicked the light switch.

The creature jumped at the sudden burst of light in the room.

"Grandfather!" Marisa whispered.

"Grandfather!"

There was no sound behind the curtain aperture.

"Grandfather!"

This time, Dr. Leonardo responded to the urgency in her voice. He came out from behind the curtain, clutching his dressing gown.

"What is it, Marisa?"

He looked in the direction of her round-eyed gaze, and saw the creature on the bench. It hissed towards him, and hacked up even further. For a long time he did nothing but stare, and then his zoological training and instinct replaced any panic in his ac-

tions.

"My gloves," he said. "Where are my gloves?"

"Under the bench—"

The thing hissed again, a sound of warning, as the Doctor groped for his protective gloves. He picked them up hastily, slipped them on, and then placed his fingers carefully on the edge of the bench, only inches from the creature. Slowly, his hands raised towards it, and perspiration gleamed on the Doctor's forehead.

"Be careful," Marisa said.

The creature hunched its shoulders, its razor-sharp claws uplifted. But it didn't resist the old man's touch as the Doctor's fingers closed around its scaly body.

He lifted it up, and Marisa recoiled.

"What is it? Where did it come from?"

"Pepe," the Doctor said. "The little fisher-boy." He put it down again. "I have never seen anything like this. There is no scientific record of such a creature."

Now he was all man of science, his voice calm and professorial. He picked up a pencil from the bench and pointed to the creature's anatomy. He spoke to his granddaughter as if to a zoological college class.

"See? The torso resembles that of a human being. The head—I cannot classify the head. The tail is reptilian, and observe the articulation of the legs." He straightened up. "But where it came from—"

He stopped when he saw the remnants of the gelatinous mass still on the workbench. He prodded it with his finger, and realized at last its true significance.

It was an egg.

"Pepe said it came from the sea. But still I do not know—"

He reached for the creature again. "Marisa, open the empty cage in the truck. Make haste!"

The girl went to the door of the trailer, and her grandfather followed with the creature in his grip.

They made their way to the truck parked beside the mobile home, and Marisa threw back the tarpaulin that covered its end. There were cages of varying sizes inside and in all but one, small animals and birds scurried frantically.

The empty cage stood about five feet tall. She swung open the wire door.

"A soft cloth," Dr. Leonardo said.

"We must cover the floor of the cage. It is too hard, too rough."

Marisa provided the cloth for the bottom of the creature's new home, and Dr. Leonardo placed him gently inside. He closed the cage door, latched it securely, and they stood off to stare wonderingly at the odd beast. It began moving about uneasily, hissing and emitting sharp, eerie cries. The sound was grating, but filled with a strange, fearful longing. Undefinable, yet erudent.

Dr. Leonardo shivered in spite of himself.

"So ugly," Marisa said quietly.

"And so very frightened." Her voice was pitying. "Poor little thing. . ."





"You are indeed your mother's daughter," Dr. Leonardo said tenderly. "Always having pity for even the meanest of God's creatures. I must confess—even I could not call this a 'poor little thing.' There is something of Hell about the beast."

He put his thin arm about her shoulder, and they returned, confused and fearful, to the trailer.

While Bob Calder, alone with the dead body of Doctor Sharman in the Rome Hospital room, stared dully at the chain of events that had caused all this to be the strange sequence that was responsible.

Chapter 4

THE THINGS THAT WENT BEFORE

THERE were eagles on Robert Calder's shoulders.

He was young for the rank, but he was in a young man's business. He had started as a child to yearn for the freedom of the air, the upper sky, and then space. But he had been luckier than General McIntosh, his commanding officer. His dreams had become realities. From box kites to model aircraft, from home-made gliders to circus stunts in the Flying School of Kansas, from the P-40's of World War II to the Thunderjets of Korea, Calder had known the sky first-hand.

Then he started having bigger dreams—dreams as big as the blue bowl that covered the night sky. A vision of winking stars and mysterious alien worlds, of a flying mission greater and more daring than Man had ever attempted before. He had had few hopes to see that dream come true in his lifetime, until the sudden arrival of orders from the headquarters of the Global Air Force. It was then he learned that other men shared the dream, and were willing to work for its reality.

He never forgot his first interview, when he learned the requirements of a crewman on the first spaceship. His interviewer was a gentle-faced, balding man with nervous bands. His name had been Dr. Judson Uhl.

"How much do you weigh, Major?"

"Hundred and seventy-five pounds."

"Think you need all that weight? You're what, five-eleven, six?"

"Six-one, sir."

"Drawback right there," Dr. Uhl said casually. "Our ideal spaceman would be a midget about so high and forty pounds in weight."

"Sorry, sir. I'm not a midget."

"Yes, so I see. But you can understand our point. Every less ounce of payload will help greatly to get this ship of ours off the Earth. And how old are you, Major?"

"Twenty-six."

"Too bad. We'd prefer it if you were eighteen. But then, you probably wouldn't have the know-how or education we require. It's all a matter of

The captured, struggling ymir amazes the scientist.



balancing out the various factors, you see."

"So far, I feel like a total loss."

Dr. Uhl smiled. "That can't be decided until after a series of tests are made. Physical, mental, and psychological. We're going to find out your reaction to weighing nothing or weighing five hundred pounds. We're going to test your orientation to loneliness, to no-gravity, to a lot of other things."

"Sounds rugged."

"It will be, Major. You'll have to want this thing awfully bad in order to go through with the examinations. But let's face it, Major Calder. Standards on paper are one thing. Human judgment is another. But let's say you come through with flying colors. Let's say you make the grade. Do you know the consequence of passing our tests?"

"Sure I do." He stiffened. "Space."

"Yes, space. Sounds good, sounds grandiose. But you may find it full of a lot of dirty, unpleasant problems. While you're waiting around for your examinations to begin, think them over. The little things, Major. The problems of food and drink in a weightless ship. The possibility of sterility caused by cosmic radiation out in the void. The problem of excessive carbon dioxide in the air you breathe; your own breath poisoning you. Think of the problems of personal hygiene, of living and breathing in a space suit. Think about waste elimination. All a lot of grimy, dirty problems, Major. Think about them. We have."

"You trying to scare me off, Dr. Uhl?"

"Not in the least. I'm trying to give you a portrait of the future, Major Calder. Believe me, you won't have enough time in the next few weeks to think these things over. So start now. If anything really troubles you, come to me and we'll talk things over. Maybe I'll ease your mind—or maybe I won't."

He grinned, and unfolded his arms.

"By the way, what's your aim in this project of ours? What job do you want to fill?"

"Only one," Calder said. "Pilot."

"That's a tall order. We plan to have only one pilot, Major. Each crew member will be taught the rudiments of flying the ship, in case of emergency. But we still plan only one official pilot. And he'll be commander of the expedition as well."

"I know that."

"And that's your only aim. You've got a lot of competition."

"Yes, sir. But that's the job I want."

Dr. Uhl turned his back. "That's all, Major."

He was still smiling when Calder was out of the room. He knew his man.

Calder's life had changed drastically that day. He was subjected to a series of grueling examinations that made OCS training seem like an ROTC picnic. He almost flunked them, too, during a psychological tryout that caught him unprepared, and revealed a significant flaw in his makeup.

The inquisitor had been a sour-faced

Colonel with red-tape mentality written all over him. From the moment the interview began, Calder was on edge.

The Colonel said: "Flyboy, huh?" "Pardon, sir?" "I said Flyboy, glamour pants, plane jockey. You heard me, Major."

Calder said nothing, but his lean face began to redden.

"But you think you're a privileged character, don't you? Think that Air Force patch gives you special rights. You're too good for us earth-bound joes, aren't you, Major?" "I don't see what you mean, sir."

"You know damn well I mean. I met your type before, Major Cocky. Captain at twenty-one, Major at twenty-four. Got the world by the short hairs. Now you're angling for a real cozy assignment. Real movie-star stuff. Spaceships. Buck Rogers—"

Calder was flushing so hard that he looked ready to explode. He let out a gust of air and said: "Are you kidding? I didn't ask for this assignment—"

"That mean you don't want it?" "Sure I want it! Think I'd let 'em push me around this way if I didn't? Did you ever sit in that centrifuge gadget of theirs, Colonel? That's no picnic—sir."

"Why do you want it? So you can sell your story to the movies? Big hero stuff?" "Not."

The Colonel just sneered. "All right, maybe I do!" Calder shouted. "I don't know myself! But what the hell's the difference? We've got real reasons for everything we want."

"You realize how slim your chances are? Of surviving such a trip?" "Sure. But I know how to handle myself. If this thing can fly, I can fly it."

"Pretty sure of yourself, aren't you? And maybe a bit immature?" Calder stood up, and the chair he was sitting on scraped back so hard that it thudded against the wall.

"Listen, sir," he said boldly. "If you want to talk, talk. If you want to poke around in my private life, and ask me if I like girls, and stuff like that, ask. But if you want me to fly that crate of yours—sir!"

"That's enough!" the Colonel snapped. "Stand at attention, Major!" Calder was shaking with rage, but stiffened at the command.

When he walked out of the room, his face was grim.

Later that day, he received orders to report to General McIntosh's quarters. He went down the corridor slowly, trying to delay the inevitable bad news.

The General's salute was absent-minded, his eyes fixed on Calder's face. "Received a note about you, Major. Not a good report. Seems you have a hot temper."

"Yes, sir."

"A hot temper has its place, Major. In combat, maybe. But for the mission we have in mind—" He sighed, and got

up to walk to the window of the office. The night sky was clear, and the stars sharp and brilliant.

"I'm sorry, sir," Calder said. "I realize now that I was being deliberately bad. But I didn't like his slurs about the Air Force—"

The General turned to him, amused. "You trying to butter me up, Major?" "No, sir," Calder flushed. "It's just that—well, I love flying, sir."

The General nodded. "So do I, Calder. So do I. But I've never been anything more than a glorified passenger. You've been lucky. You can be even luckier, if you really wanted to be."

"I do, sir."

"This ship we plan to launch will require seventeen crewmen and one pilot. One pilot, Calder. That man is very important to us. He must be as perfect a man as we can find."

"Yes, sir."

"He must be able to keep his head at all times. He will be performing an unprecedented feat. He will meet conditions no man has met before. A perfect man, Calder."

"Yes, sir," the Major said unhappily.

Then the General was grinning. "But I doubt if there is such an animal on Earth, Major Calder. Fearless. Emotion-proof. Humans aren't as perfect as the stars."

Calder's heart thudded, but still he said nothing.

"The final decision on the man awaits the recommendation of three men. Dr. Uhl, the civilian scientist in charge, is one of them. Another is Dr. Sharmán, our medical officer. Both have already made up their minds, so the outcome rests with the third man. Myself."

"Yes, sir."

The General walked towards him, and put his hand on Calder's shoulder. "Fly it for me," he said softly. "Fly it for me, Major."

Two months later, before the sun had risen over the hills of the Nevada space station, the XY-21 was poised and ready.

Thunder began to roll over the mountains, thunder man-made and rich with promise of the things to come.

The huge spaceship shuddered, and its rocket fire spilled over the ground beneath it. Slowly, it raised itself from the giant grip of the earth, and slowly it climbed upwards with gathering speed. Then, as if flung off the shackles of gravity, the vessel ripped into the clouds overhead, tearing at the heavens with its sharp-pointed nose. At last, only the faint glow of its exhaust could be seen by the spectators below.

Inside the ship, Robert Calder, now with a Colonel's insignia sewn to his ballooning gray space-clothing, lay flat in the chair that was to be his home for many weeks ahead.

The sixteen members of the ship's crew were similarly prisoners of the iron force of the ship's acceleration. The force crushed their bodies, squeezed

their hearts and lungs, flattened the contours of their faces. *Brennachts* was reached in two interminable minutes, and then the acceleration began again, with a new supply of atomic fuel blazing in the rocket's underbelly.

Some came out of the acceleration coma without difficulty; others took many hours before they could accept the new horror of the journey: weightlessness.

Their minds bary, their fingers not behaving as their training demanded, with movements awkward and slow, their tempers short. . . weightlessness was the true horror. But even these were finally conquered, conquered by months of pre-conditioning in the

Earth laboratories below.

But despite all the preparation, there were problems. Even the ingenious devices created by Dr. Uhl and the others couldn't recreate the identical conditions of space-flight to the nth degree.

The true answers to man's reaction would be found only in space. And Colonel Calder found them.

First there was Jensen, the hard-muscled blond boy with the incredible head for calculus and the unblinking eyes of a cobra. He had been the quietest of all the candidates for the XY-21, and his quietness had caused concern among the psychologists. But they had given him the decision, reasoning that his lack of gregariousness was well

compensated by his sober, intelligent outlook on life, his physical stamina and his keen mathematical brilliance.

But Jensen went wrong in space. At first, he reacted to the zero gravity of the ship by a surprisingly gay attitude. Of all the crew, it was Jensen who grinned widest when pencils floated and poured coffee remained in a pulsating ball of liquid in the cabin.

He had laughed, and talked of the free-fall sensation as if it were a great joke. Later, Colonel Calder cursed himself for not realizing that Jensen had laughed too much.

On the fourth day of the trip, Calder

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The scientist prepares to give a tranquilizing injection to the Venetian ymir.

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on to a ladder and get down. That's an order."

Jensen only chuckled. "Come on up, Colonel. Enjoy yourself."

"I said it's an order, Jensen—"

"Hey, Colonel, you're upside down, you're the one that's topsy-turvy, Colonel, not me. It's all a matter of viewpoint. How about that, Colonel?" He laughed in his throat, and the laugh went on a long time.

"Haffner," Calder said to the first engineer. "Go up and pull him down. Dr. Sharman, you get a sedative ready."

Jensen fought off the engineer's approach. It took three men to get him under control, and four to hold him down while the chief scientist applied the point of a hypodermic to his arm. They rubbed his flesh, trying to get the sedative to circulate in the weightless atmosphere. Finally, Jensen relaxed and fell into a labored, delirious sleep.

When he awoke, Jensen was his silent self again. Colonel Calder was never to tell Jensen's family that the

had been restored on the ship.

The landing had gone far more smoothly than had been anticipated. The heavy clouds that blanketed the planet were considered to be the major hazard of the entire flight. Using infrared sighting equipment, they had scouted the globe for a safe surface area, and the descent had been made with unexpected ease. For a moment, it almost seemed as if the yellow clouds of Venus had parted, like the Red-Sea of Moses, to permit their entry on the silent, sandy world. The event had an almost mystical quality, and Colonel Calder found himself uttering a prayer of thankfulness when the rocket's fire carved out a landing surface beneath them, and the ship came to rest.

Excitement cracked in the atmosphere of the vessel as they prepared for debarkation. Suddenly, everyone was helpful and happy; even the tight-lipped Jensen had an added gleam in his eyes as he strapped on the breathing apparatus that had been provided for them. Mason and Cardell

It was good to bear the responsive laughter of the men, despite his nervous overtones.

Calder said: "Looks like our big problem might be darkness. When we bivouac around the ship, we'll have to break out the electric torches first thing. Then is it doesn't brighten up, I think we'll have to erect some kind of lighting system around the ship, so we can find it at all times. Dr. Sharman—"

"Yes, Colonel?"

"Would you take charge of setting that up?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Okay. We won't do any exploring right now. Every man knows his duties; let's get the right supplies unloaded. Keep everything close to the ship, and don't anybody decide to wander off. Any man found more than twenty yards from the XY gets a summary court-martial."

There was a great deal to do in the next eight hours. The crew members set about their jobs with little waste motion and much enthusiasm. Dr. Sharman and two others set up the portable generator and a string of powerful floodlights outside the ship, and their cheerful glow helped dispel some of the gloom that surrounded them.

"Looks good," Mason drawled. "Now we can find the ship fine, Colonel. Only question is—now anything on Venus can find us."

"I wouldn't worry," Calder said. "If there was intelligent life on the planet, we'd have heard from them by now. We didn't exactly sneak in, you know."

"Well, suppose it's unintelligent," Mason said. "But mean."

Calder laughed, and returned to work.

It was on the second day of cautious exploration, when the ring had been widened to include some fifty yards around the ship, that the short-circuit occurred.

Four men were guarding the XY-21 while the others went about their varied duties. None of the four realized what was happening until the sparks began to fly from the power lines outside, and the strangled, terrorized shriek came to startle them into action.

"Holy catfish!" Shuster said, looking at the victim of their unwitting trap. "Get a look at that baw! Must be eight feet tall!"

"And ugly," Bailey said. "Look at that tail—absolutely prebensible. And that face—"

"Must have been electrocuted," another crewman suggested. "Wandered into the power lines, might have been trying to eat the damn things. But the voltage wasn't very high—"

"Wait until the Colonel gets a load of this. Hey—do you suppose the thing's intelligent?"

"I doubt it," Shuster said, shaking his head. "It's too damn ugly."

"Oh, I dunno, Shuster. You're no beauty, but I hear you're pretty smart."

"Knock it off. Hey, let's get the circuit fixed before our boys get lost in

20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH



blond man had never spoken again. When he died on Venus, he went silent to the grave in that distant planet.

There were other personal mishaps before the XV-21 made landfall on the cloud-shrouded planet that was their destination.

Bailey, the youngest member of the crew, whose cheerfulness had inspired them all during the dreary weeks of the trip, was stricken by a strange fever for which they had no palliative. He had been one of the first to die when the poisonous vapours of Venus infiltrated their breathing apparatus. Key Kyoto, the young Chinese physicist, had gone berserk just before the landing, and had to be restrained forcibly. Mason and Cardell, who had begun an abiding friendship during the days of examination on Earth, suddenly began quarreling bitterly over trifles, and refused to speak to each other again. Even Mason's death on Venus didn't soften Cardell's heart; he continued to curse him on the return flight, and died in the Mediterranean Sea without forgiveness for the men.

But despite all, the day came when the planet Venus hovered in the view-scope—and for a moment, harmony

forgot their feud for the minutes before the hatch opened on Venus. Key Kyoto seemed calm once more, and Bailey's fever not so debilitating.

Dr. Sharman repeated the brief orientation speech that had been heard a dozen times since the voyage began.

Then Colonel Calder turned the wheel that opened the hatch.

They came out in single file, with Calder having the duty, the honor, and the danger of stepping forth first on the spongy, sandy terrain of the planet. He described his impression later as: "A yellow-reddish mist all around us, like a fire burning on a foggy night. No stars visible. Mist everywhere; mist around your ankles so that you couldn't see your feet. It was cold and damp, too; even through the space-suit you could feel the cold clinging to your skin. The ground seemed to be of sand, yet it felt wet and mossy, spongy somehow. You were never really sure of your footing, and yet you never lost your balance."

The first words spoken on the planet were those of Shuster, the chief geologist of the expedition. He flicked his radio switch and said:

"Dis mus' be de place."

that crazy desert. We'll worry about our monster friend later."

Later, it was Dr. Sharman who was most concerned with the examination of the alien beast who had stumbled into the camp. His excited study of the creature occupied their attention for the next five hours on the planet. But their attention was diverted shortly afterwards, when young Bailey fell in a dead faint.

Calder had him brought into the ship, assuming that the fever had come upon him again. But there was little fever. Bailey's breath was labored, his voice choked, his pupils dilated. And there was an odd tinge of the sputum and blood samples that Dr. Sharman took from the youth's body.

He drew Colonel Calder aside. "I don't like this color-change, Boh. I can't explain it, but I suspect some kind of poison in Bailey's system."

"Poison? Maybe he's eaten some spoiled ration. Maybe he got careless and sampled some of the local vegetation—"

"I don't think so. But we'll run a check on the food stores. If there's something wrong with it—" He looked grim.

A thorough check was made of the food supplies, and no trace of contamination was detected.

The exploration went on. Twelve hours after Bailey's faint, the boy gasped out something about his family, and died in Shuster's arms.

They buried him in the spongy sands of Venus. Colonel Calder presided at the burial ceremony, and consecrated Bailey's remains to God and to Man's aspiring spirit.

Then the poison spread. It seemed to come upon the men all at once. Almost within an hour of each other, the crew felt the sudden surge of dizziness and nausea; the strange combination of exhilaration and depression; the clutching pain at their hearts and lungs. One by one, the stricken men were led back to the ship by those whose attacks had been mild.

And one by one, in as many hours, eight men of the XY-21 died, twenty million miles from home.

"That settles it," Calder told the numb group of survivors inside the ship. "We're going to have to cut the voyage short. There are only nine of us left now; that means each one of us will have to perform extra duties on the return voyage. We can't risk losing another man. I know there's still a lot we want to do here—I know that Dr. Sharman is hardly satisfied with the small amount of territory we've been able to cover. But for the good of this entire enterprise, I'm ordering this ship back."

Dr. Sharman stood up. "We will not use the word failure. We have collected many samples. We have mineral, botanical, and geological specimens. And we have the egg of the creature that stumbled into our power lines. We will not use the word failure, Colonel."

Grimly, they set about their duties,

readying the XY-21 for the return journey.

No one looked back at the eight unmarked graves, already blanketed by the mist and shifting sand. But Shuster said:

"I wonder if God knows where Venus is?"

"Sure he does," Calder answered. "He'll know they're there. And they'll get special attention. Take my word for it."

An hour later, the rockets of the XY-21 were exploding again.

And a few weeks later, crippled by a meteor strike, the ship returned home—only to disappear forever into the sea and with it untold months perhaps years of progress.

Chapter 5

THE EMPTY CAGE

THE day broke, serenely as ever, over Sicily.

Marisa listened to the familiar sounds of bird and animal chatter, as her grandfather's specimens he had collected greeted the day.

Then:

It was Dr. Leonardo's voice, calling excitedly but without alarm. She got up quickly and opened the door of the trailer.

"Yes, grandfather?"

"Come here!"

She stepped out of the trailer and followed her grandfather to the truck. He was pointing to the cage that had received the creature from the egg the night before.

"Observe, mi cara," he said. "Observe our friend this morning."

She looked, and the sight startled her.

The creature had grown.

"It's impossible!" she gasped. "He—he's twice the size. He's almost three feet tall."

"Yes. And in a few hours . . ."

"It's unbelievable!"

The creature hissed at them, its reptilian tail swishing against the soft cloth at the bottom of the cage. Its ugly eyes were fixed on the girl.

"Just think!" Dr. Leonardo said. "This is a genuine phenomenon. Something *sui generis*. Think what will be said when I bring this strange creature to the Museo Zoologico in Rome!"

He started to move away. Marisa said: "Where are you going?"

"To the village. To learn from the fisher-boy where in the sea it was that he found our friend."

"Grandfather—"

"Yes, my child?"

She shook her head, her eyes still adhered to the dragon-like head of the creature.

"Nothing . . ."

The fortress was a masterpiece of the pioneer's art. Built sturdily of sand near the prow of an overturned fishing boat, and at least two feet high, it was perfect for defending the plainsmen against Indian attack. Especially

when its chief (and only) occupant was so skilled with the six-shooter, and wore such an awe-inspiring cowboy hat.

"Pow! Pow!" Pepe's wooden gun picked off another savage. "Pow! Pow! Pow!" They were hitting the dust all around him. He turned towards the beach where Verrico, Mondello and the others were preoccupied with the hanging of nets, wanting them to notice his talent and bravery.

But what he saw caused his face to change. Dr. Leonardo! His hand went anxiously to the cowboy hat on his head. Was the old man coming to ask for his two hundred lira? Had he been disappointed with his purchase?

Pepe didn't wait to find out. He crawled around the other side of the boat's hull, holding fast to his hat from Taxis, ducking out of sight.

The Doctor was speaking. "Salutis, Verrico, Mondello. You can perhaps inform me of the whereabouts of the boy, Pepe?"

"Pepe?" Mondello snorted. "He is over there, playing like a Taxis cowboy—" He looked at the fortress, now deserted to the Indians. "Ah, he has gone! Yet he was here a moment ago."

Verrico said: "I shall see him tonight, Doctore, and tell him to seek you out tomorrow."

Dr. Leonardo shook his head. "No. Tomorrow I shall not be here. Today, Marisa and I are on our way to Rome. But grazi. Addio. Do not trouble any more."

"Addio, Doctore."

From his hiding place, Pepe watched with satisfaction as Dr. Leonardo strode sadly away. Now his hat was safe! He touched it admiringly, and was about to return to his fortress, when the sound of airplane motors in the blue sky caught his ears.

He looked upwards, and his mouth opened in wonder at the sight of the Navy seaplane dropping gracefully to the water, landing in a wash of white foam.

How wonderful life was becoming! Pepe thought. In so few hours, he had seen an amazing giant aircraft dive forever into the sea. He had seen real flying men from the great United States Air Force, and had recovered one of their jackets for his very own. And most important, he had found a treasure in the sea worth two hundred lira, the price of the cowboy hat from Taxis. And now—

From the direction of the town, a dust-caked jeep was driving swiftly towards the shoreline. The Commissario of Police was sitting stiffly beside the driver. When his jeep halted, he got out and looked towards the landed plane.

Pepe crouched behind the boat, which had suddenly become a huge boulder in the middle of Death Valley. A villainous snarl crossed his sun-browned face, and he loaded his wooden gun from an imaginary gunbelt. He lifted it, took careful aim at the seaplane, and—

"Pow Pow!"

It was a direct hit, although the two men climbing out of the plane and onto the wharf ladder, didn't seem affected by Pepe's bullets. Nevertheless, the boy was satisfied with his day's work. He stuck his gun into his holster, hitched his pants, and walked off.

The Commissario stepped forward. "May I introduce myself, General. I am Signore Unte, Commissario di Polizia in Gerra. From the Governo in Roma, I have received a telegramma. I am to cooperate with you, and assure you that my facilities are yours."

General McIntosh put out his hand. "Thank you, Signore Unte. And this is Dr. Uhl."

"How do you do," the Doctor said. "The honor is mine." The Commissario seemed to bow to the General. "If you will but accompany me, I will take you to your Colonel Calder."

McIntosh couldn't conceal the quick look of worry that crossed his square heavy-jawed face.

"Is he—he's not badly hurt is he?" "Pray rest assured, General. He recovers rapidly."

They drove off in the jeep while the fishermen on shore stared after them. Dr. Uhl said:

"You think a lot of Colonel Calder, General. Perhaps a little more than most commanding officers."

McIntosh stared straight ahead. "He's a valuable man. We need more like him."

"I didn't quite mean that."

"What did you mean?"

"Nothing," Dr. Uhl smiled. "I have a son myself, General. He's only eleven, but he has dreams too."

McIntosh looked thoughtful. "It's not that simple, Doctor. About my feelings towards Calder. I can't explain it myself. But you know—sometimes I am Calder."

Dr. Uhl looked at him, and his face was understanding.

A few minutes later, the jeep was pulling up in front of the Commune di Gerra, and the tall figure of the Colonel was stepping forward with a crisp salute.

General McIntosh returned it hastily, eager to grasp the Colonel's saluting hand in congratulation.

"You made it," he said, his voice choked. "You made it, Boh. The first man in history? How does it feel?"

"Fine, General McIntosh." Calder grinned. "In a way..."

"I know what you're thinking. You're thinking of the crew. It's tragic that they died just in the moment of their glory. But still, the ship was brought home, Boh. The world won't forget that—"

Dr. Uhl put out his hand and grinned. "It was a great job, Boh. A really great job."

"Look," the General said. "Is there someplace private where we can talk?"

"My office is yours," the Commissario said graciously. "This way, gentlemen."

"Good. We've got a lot to talk about, Boh. I want to hear everything—every

single minute of it." He gripped Calder's arm and led him into the building.

On a mountainous highway not many miles from the Commune di Gerra, the truck and trailer of Dr. Leonardo moved cautiously over the narrow road.

Night was falling slowly, the sun descending in a spectacular splash of color into the Mediterranean.

On the seat beside the old man, Marisa dozed.

A wind came up from the south, and Dr. Leonardo pulled his collar around his throat.

In the rear of the truck, the wind caught the loose edge of the tarpaulin, and it flapped in uneven rhythm against the cage inside.

But the flapping didn't disturb the cage's occupant.

The cage was empty.

The Alfa Romeo, long and shining, its black body like mirrors in the night, drew up before the Commune di Gerra, its official flags fluttering from the front fenders. The villagers who were still lingering outside gaped at the magnificence of this vehicle. Never had such a splendid automobile stopped in the village of Gerra, and with such a distinguished passenger.

When the elderly gentleman, with his fine white hair and mustachios, stepped forth from the car, a murmur of awe came from the onlookers. They didn't know Signore Contino by name, but they could tell from his stance, his carriage, his clothing, his automobile, that he was a government official of dignity and importance.

The Commissario's Carlinieri saluted as the new arrival came to the entrance of the building. They escorted him within, past the ospedale, directly to the headquarters of the Police.

It was a bare, shabby office, an unimpressive stage for such an impressive man as the Commissario to perform upon. But the presence of Signore Contino gave it suddenly an air of prestige. The Commissario rose from behind his battered desk as the Carlinieri announced the name of the visitor from Rome.

"Avante, per favore," the police chief said.

"Grazie," Contino replied, with a slight bow.

"I am honored." The Commissario turned to the others. "Gentlemen, may I present Signore Contino of the Italian Department of State. The General McIntosh, Dr. Judson Uhl, Colonel Calder."

Contino nodded to each man in turn. The General cleared his throat.

"I thank you, Signore, for coming so promptly. And I thank your Government for expressing its desire to cooperate in this matter. I must beg you however, for the moment, to observe complete secrecy."

"It is understood," Contino said.

McIntosh rubbed his chin and leaned against the edge of the desk. He

folded his arms, his face grave.

"What I have to say to you will sound incredible. But I assure you that it is true."

He paused and looked at the Colonel. "Colonel Calder here has just returned from an expedition to Venus."

The old man cocked his head, as if uncertain of his own bearing.

"Eh? To, er, Venice? You mean perhaps Venetia?"

"To Venus, Signore," McIntosh said grimly. "The planet Venus."

Contino looked around him, his eyes wary, and then he looked plainly suspicious.

"To the planet Venus?" he repeated.

"That is correct."

The State Department official flapped his arms in the air, and they landed with a thud against his side.

"I had been informed that this matter was connected with something vast. But—the planet Venus!" He turned his eyes on Calder, looking him over as if the Colonel were an alien creature himself.

"Man's first interplanetary voyage," McIntosh said, his own words awing him. "On the return trip, the spaceship was crippled by a meteor. Except for Colonel Calder, the entire crew perished."

"I am grieved," Contino said quietly.

"Now we are faced with a problem," the General continued. "A problem of enormous consequence. In order for you to help us, Signore, I must explain carefully."

The old man sought a chair, and lowered himself without once removing his eyes from the General's face.

"The problem is this. The atmosphere on Venus is such that a human being cannot breathe it and survive. There is carbon dioxide in the air, but no oxygen. We believed that we could develop artificial respiratory equipment that would sustain human life, for a limited time, on this planet. We created such equipment, and after the first successful landing was made, it operated satisfactorily for some time. But it wasn't fool-proof. There were elements in the air, dust-clouds of some extraordinary nature, that suddenly poisoned our men. Several members of our expedition died there before the others realized the danger. Dr. Sharman, the chief scientist aboard, also became fatally ill. He died here after the ship's crash."

Contino's face was a study in wonder.

"Fascinating!" he said. "Horrible—but fascinating!"

"But this is the important part, Signore Contino. On that ship was a particular sealed metal container—" The General measured the air with his hands. "It was approximately this long, and this diameter. In it, Colonel Calder informs me, is an unborn specimen of life on this planet."

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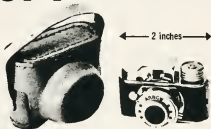
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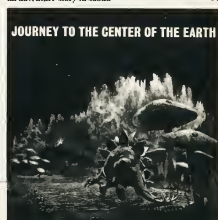
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